



Re-Imagining the Fashion System

How deconstruction could shape
sustainability in fashion

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ABSTRACT - Deconstructivist thinking for sustainability

Philosophy is necessary to truly understand a concept, to think critically, creatively, and ethically in a world saturated with information, challenging the assumptions and illusions that underlie our culture and society; It exposes the contradictions and prejudices of our beliefs and values. (Carr, D., 1988)

In this thesis, I want to apply deconstructivist thinking to analyze our modern Fashion System. The latter is saturated with oppositions, concerning the various ways of consuming fashion. Since the rise of “-core” micro trends on TikTok, fads are influencing consumers' behavior. (BoF, 2022)

The main theme of my thesis is the concept of deconstructive fashion in a postmodern reality, which I further analyze throughout the chapters, using case studies to support my argument, and contextualizing this philosophy of fashion in our

contemporary productive system, to shape new ways of designing and consuming through supporting sustainable values.

The goal is to prove that everything in the system is connected: recognizing the stereotypes that the fashion world imposes and deconstructing them is fundamental to truly understanding it. In particular, I critically analyze the conventionally binary opposite concepts of **consumption-driven capitalism** and **sustainable fashion**, deconstructing them and proving that they are currently intrinsic to one another. The aim is to create a conflict between the two concepts to question the paradigms and norm of the Fashion System and consequently individuate new forms of design through the case studies of pioneering designers who applied deconstruction to fashion. These deconstructivist design approaches are the catalysts of moving toward a truly sustainable “anti-fashion” system .

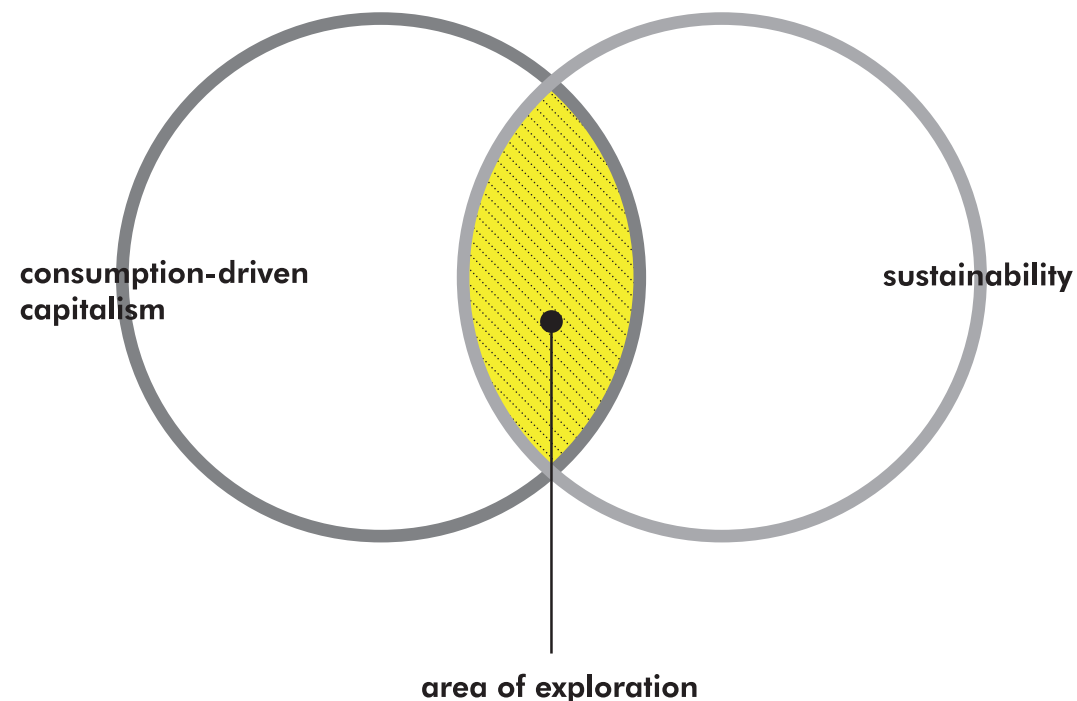


Fig.1 Venn Diagram

Through the research and analysis on the opposite topics of consumption-driven capitalism and sustainability, using deconstruction as a methodology, I explore what they have in common in the current fashion system.

ABSTRACT - ITA

La filosofia è necessaria per comprendere veramente un concetto, per pensare in modo critico, creativo ed etico in un mondo saturo di informazioni, sfidando i presupposti e le illusioni che sono alla base della nostra cultura e società; Mette a nudo le contraddizioni e i pregiudizi delle nostre convinzioni e dei nostri valori. (Carr, D., 1988)

In questa tesi, voglio applicare il pensiero decostruzionista per analizzare il sistema moda moderno. Quest'ultimo è saturo di opposizioni, riguardanti i diversi modi di consumare la moda. Dall'aumento dei micro-trend e “-core” su TikTok, le mode passeggere stanno influenzando il comportamento dei consumatori. (BoF, 2022)

Il tema principale della mia tesi è il concetto di moda decostruttivista in una realtà postmoderna, che viene, nel corso del documento, analizzata ulteriormente attraverso l'ausilio di casi di studio e contestualizzando questa filosofia della moda nel

nostro sistema produttivo contemporaneo, per dare forma a nuovi modi di vivere, creare e consumare sostenendo valori sostenibili.

L'obiettivo è illustrare come nel sistema tutto è connesso: riconoscere gli stereotipi che il mondo della moda impone e decostruirli è fondamentale per comprenderlo veramente. In particolare, analizzo criticamente i concetti convenzionalmente binari e opposti di capitalismo guidato dai consumi e sostenibilità, decostruendoli e dimostrando che sono attualmente intrinseci l'uno all'altro. L'obiettivo è creare un conflitto tra i due concetti per mettere in discussione i paradigmi e le norme del sistema moda e di conseguenza individuare nuove forme di design attraverso i casi studio di designer pionieristici che hanno applicato la decostruzione alla moda. Questi approcci progettuali decostruttivisti sono i catalizzatori del percorso verso un sistema “anti-fashion” veramente sostenibile.

“Criticality is an essential component to reason in assessing and weighing terms of reference to afford the best framework for understanding”

[Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas (2017) in “Critical Fashion Practice: From Westwood to Van Beirendonck”, p. 1]

01 INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPT OF DECONSTRUCTION

This introductory chapter represents the basis of my investigation of postmodern fashion. It is developed on multiple levels, starting from the theories behind deconstruction, a concept introduced by the philosopher Jacques Derrida, and continuing in its practical applications in design. My aim is to explore the dynamics of our contemporary society and highlight how deconstructivist thinking influences design, specifically fashion.

Creating a conflict between traditional assumptions and questioning the real meaning of things, deconstruction has been an important notion for the cultural evolution of our society. But how and why? Deconstruction challenges established structures ingrained in our minds and disrupts binary oppositions, such as those between beautiful and ugly, functional and decorative, feminine and masculine (Derrida, J., 1976).

In the context of fashion, this approach translates into a critical analysis of aesthetic codes and conventional norms. In a postmodern landscape, designers often deconstruct garments, disassembling and reassembling fabrics and forms to create new expressions of identity and style, surpassing traditional assumptions about fashion (Loscialpo, F., 2011).

This process of destruction and reconstruction not only challenges our perceptions on the meaning of fashion but also our ideas about culture, identity, and society (ibid). In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, fashion becomes a powerful medium to express the complexities of our era. Through deconstruction, designers can address current social themes such as consumerism, sustainability, and cultural diversity, proposing a critical and innovative vision of how we dress and live (Gill, A., 1998).

In summary, deconstruction in postmodern fashion is not just an aesthetic trend but also a mean to question and reflect on our identity, our culture and the interaction with the world around us. This chapter will explore these dynamics, offering a deep understanding on the origins of deconstructivist thinking and its consequences on contemporary design.



Fig.2 The Truman Show" (1998)

This film shows how easy it is to believe in an illusion: the protagonist lives in a reality show, his life is manipulated by the media. The realization that he is surrounded by a fake reality raises questions about freedom and authenticity.

1.0
Literature Review

This thesis aim is to explore the dynamics of contemporary society, especially regarding fashion consumption, and highlight how deconstructivist thinking influences design. As previously introduced, deconstruction is a process that creates a conflict between traditional assumption fostering the questioning the real meaning of things. As a philosophical concept it challenges established structures and accepted norms, leading designers to dismantle and reinterpret conventional garment construction: by doing so it is possible to transform aesthetic principles but also broader cultural, social and moral issues. By examining how deconstruction shapes fashion, it becomes possible to understand its significance in reflecting and critiquing a complex, interconnected world and its role in promoting innovation and cultural dialogue.

To better understand these aspects , this chapter explores the theoretical and historical conception of deconstruction, from its philosophical foundations of, its application in cultural theory, and its influence on design disciplines such as architecture and fashion. To support my deconstructionist approach to critically analyze the Fashion System, the literature reviewed for this initial part of my research focuses on understanding the dynamics behind this philosophical concept.

The notion of “Deconstruction” was introduced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his book “Of Grammatology ” (1967), as a way of critically analyzing text to destabilize pre-established patterns, particularly in language and reveal the inherent instability and ambiguity of meaning (Derrida, 1967). The literature consulted to understand Derrida’s theory consisted of philosophical book chapters, interviews and original letters to gain theoretical knowledge and direct testimonies about deconstruction from an academic point of view.

To gain perspective of this concept and put it in the larger context of postmodernity, further texts, mainly academic articles and scientific articles (Google Scholar, Science Direct), were analyzed: Maurizio Ferrari’s article “Postmodernism and the

Deconstruction of Modernism” (1988) highlights society’s shift from modernism to postmodernism, characterized by the rejection of idealist values rooted in Enlightenment, and the doubting of absolute truths.

It was found through academic studies and articles (Google Scholar, Jstor) that today deconstructivist philosophy is reflected in society’s progress, especially in feminist studies, of dismantling fixed identities (gender, sexual, cultural, religious), by questioning traditional norms, which are oppressive and limiting. Mary Poovey’s work "Feminism and Deconstruction" (1988) highlights how deconstruction aids in questioning the essentialist views that have traditionally defined gender roles. By exposing the constructed nature of these roles, deconstruction promotes a more inclusive understanding of gender, allowing for diverse expressions and identities.

For the second part of the chapter, I applied the previously studied theoretical framework in a more practical context, that of design and fashion. I reviewed literature such as journal articles, academic texts and reports (Google Scholar, Dezeen, Jstor) to investigate how deconstruction manifests itself in the physical world, from its first appearance in architecture to its later conjugations in graphic and fashion design. Insights on deconstructivist architecture were given through journal articles found on architecture websites (Dezeen, ArchDaily) and the archive of the 1988 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art "Deconstructivist Architecture", which marked a significant moment in defining this architectural concept: the works presented at the exhibition showcased the potential of deconstruction to disrupt and re-imagine architectural norms, influencing contemporary architecture to this day (Fiederer, 2018).

The topic of deconstruction in fashion emerged in 1980s to describe the works of Japanese avant-garde designers Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, who refused the glamorous conventions of Parisian haute couture. In his 1985 article “Rei Kawakubo and the Aesthetics of Poverty”, Harold

Koda outlines the principles of this new fashion direction, characterized by raw, unfinished, and distressed garments. Fashion academics, such as Bonnie English and Yuniya Kawamura, research was reviewed to gain knowledge on their pioneering works, and how they deconstructed Western aesthetics and ideology. (Kawamura, Y., 2004)

The term “deconstructivism” applied to fashion was further affirmed through Bill Cunningham’s article “Fashion du Siècle,” published on Details magazine in 1990, in which he used this term to describe Martin Margiela’s 1989 collection and his particular method of tailoring, that displaces and reassembles the garments parts. [Details vol. 8 (1990): 177–300]. Further academic articles, written by fashion scholars such as Flavia Loscialpo, Maria Skivko and Alison Gill, retrieved from Google Scholar, JStor and Academia, on the work of Margiela were consulted, to better understand his role in this fashion movement and his effect on clothing structures and the mechanics of the fashion system.

Document Included (Typology)	Book Chapters, Interview Transcripts, Academic Articles
Time Horizon	1967 - 2020
Keywords	Deconstruction, Philosophy, Architecture, Fashion, Postmodernity

Table 1. Criteria for texts selection

1.1 Philosophical deconstruction

Defining deconstruction as a philosophical concept is difficult since its nature is inherently anti-structural and open to interpretation (Derrida, J., 1983). Indeed, Derrida states that it is not a method, or a technique, but a critical approach, an event, something that almost naturally takes place. [Ibid] The most common understanding of deconstruction is simply a form of critiquing the existing order. (Gill A., 2007). The distinction with classical Western philosophy is that this emerging way of critical thinking doesn't offer a clear solution or interpretation to life, language, and meaning, on the contrary, it doubts every existing point of reference and the rationality of modernism. In his letter to Professor Toshihiko Izutsu (1983), Derrida gives us the only open statement about the definition of his approach:

"It is not enough to say that deconstruction could not be reduced to some methodological instrumentality or to a set of rules and transposable procedures. [...] It must also be made clear that deconstruction is not even an act or an operation. [...] Not only because it does not return to an individual or collective subject who would take the initiative and apply it to an object, a text, a theme, etc. Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject, or even of modernity" (Derrida, 1983)

The deconstructivist approach aims to dissolve pre-established patterns, particularly in language: it abandons rhetoric and separates the links between words, splitting the signifier from the meaning;

the result is exposing the instability and ambiguity of everything we know, subverting stereotypes created by language. It creates a conflict between traditional assumptions, which leads to thinking of them critically. (Liguori, A., 2020)

The consequence of Derrida's deconstruction was the identification and doubting of the "oppositions" conceived in Western thought and language. Oppositions such as speech-writing, presence-absence, essence-appearance, male-female, etc., are conventionally perceived as "binary" and are defined as strictly set off against one another. By deconstructing this conception, Derrida demonstrates that oppositions are dependent on one another, thus part of a wider spectrum, in which they co-exist. (Derrida, J., 1976)

These oppositions derive from "Logocentrism" (from the Greek logos "word, discourse; reason,"), a typically Western concept, that prioritizes the word over what it stands for. Logocentrism leads to the assumption that there is a fixed and stable meaning behind every sign and that this meaning can be fully expressed and communicated through language. This, according to Derrida, is an "illusion" because it is a simplification of reality, which is ambiguous and has no direct connection with the words that are used to describe it. [ibid]

The instability created by deconstruction, which was criticized for being anti-rational, is not an end to itself but leads to new links, new meanings, and interpretations of reality which have the potential to create change in various fields of life. (Culler, J., 1982)

where is the center?

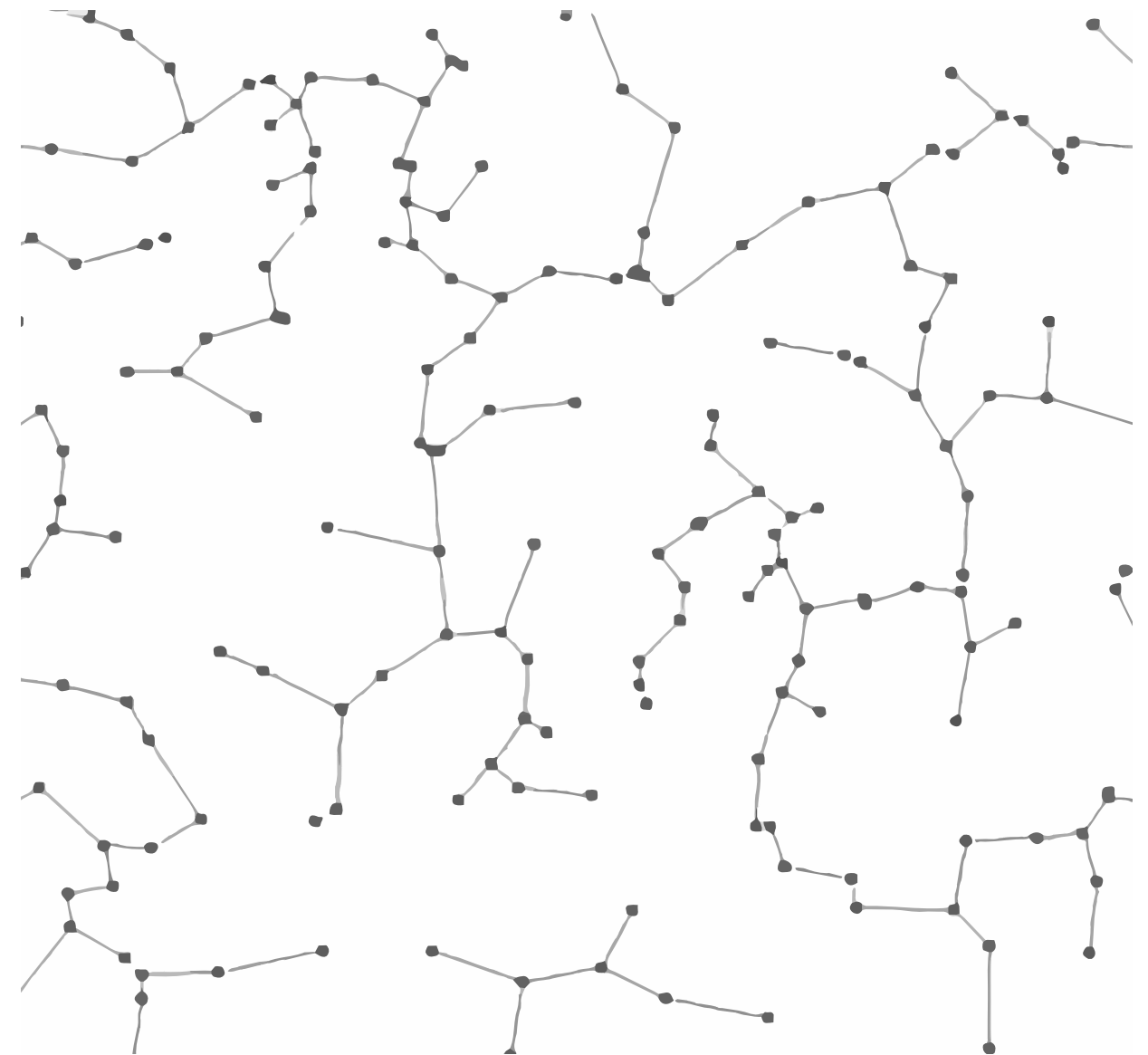


Fig. 3 Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play" (1966) uses the fundamental logics of structuralism to argue for a reconsideration of the concept of meaning and interpretation. He attempts to showcase an approach that accepts the absence of a fixed centrality in both meaning as well as human nature. [Derrida, J. (1966) Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences]

1.2 Declinations in design and fashion

Given its disruptive and critical nature, deconstruction has now become part of postmodern thinking and is being used for breaking down the constraints of fixed structures in favor of a more open, less defined society and collective mentality. (Ferraris, M., Tarabozetti Segre, A., 1988)

For example, it has been prominent in feminist theory to undermine the presumed supremacy of masculinity in our society. By deconstructing the oppositions “man-woman” and the gender binary, many feminist scholars critiqued essentialist views of gender, challenging the fixed and often oppressive meanings attributed to femininity and masculinity. (Poovey, M., 1988)

In the same manner of subverting binary structures and norms, deconstruction has a great influence on arts and design. Relating to visual design deconstruction is described as ‘a form of critique of the established order, a non-conformist gesture, which exposes not only the structures themselves, but also in a metaphorical sense, the structures of our thinking and perception’ (Zbrokowska, A., 2015, p. 10).

The first visual field in which we can recognize deconstruction is architecture.

The 1988 exhibition at the MoMA, simply named “Deconstructivist Architecture”, was the event where this architectural concept was really defined, as it presented the works of pioneer deconstructivist architects such as Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry, whose works are extremely influential and contemporary to this day. (Fiederer, L., 2018)

This form of architecture emerged as a sort of continuation of Russian Constructivist's legacy, an early form of avant-garde design that aimed to play with irregular geometries and deconstructing form, but that was interrupted by the modern movement. (Johnson, P., 1988) As a reaction to the scientific rationalism and form purity of the latter, in the 1980's a new group of architects started to design buildings following the same avant-garde ideals of challenging conventional structures to create buildings that defy pre-established construction rules. (Hopkins O., 2022)



Fig.4 Kazimir Malevich, Suprematist painting, 1915-17

Main exponent of the Russian avant-garde, Malevich deconstructed simple pure forms, to create unstable geometry compositions.

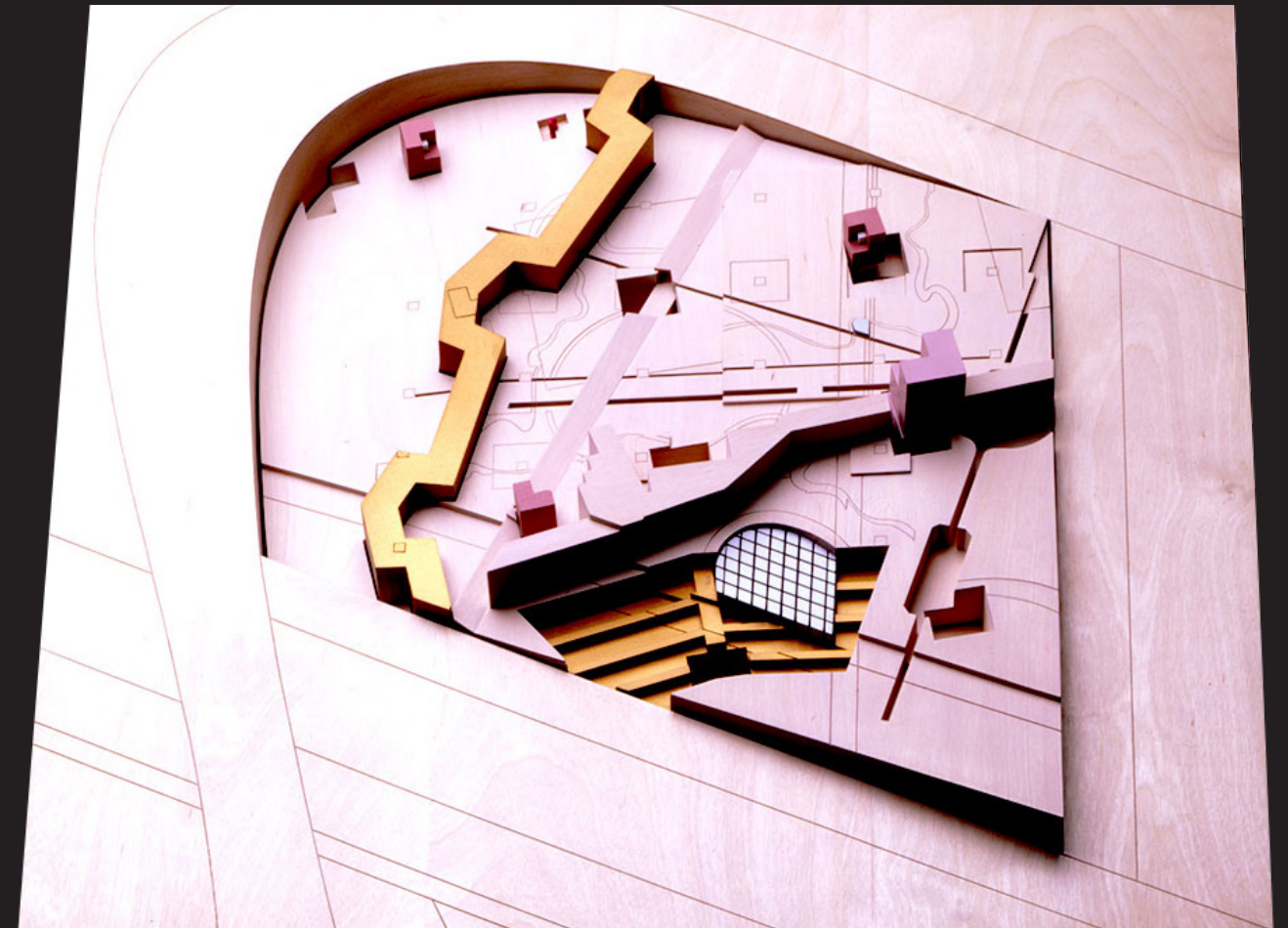


Fig.5 Model of “La Villette” project by Peter Eisenman, Paris, 1987

Jacques Derrida, together with Peter Eisenman, tasked with the production of a “garden”, participated in the Paris Parc de La Villette project under the direction of head architect Bernard Tschumi. Their garden was never included in Parc de la Villette, due to budget limits.



Top:
Fig.8 Comme des Garçons, 1981

Bottom:
Fig.7 Yohji Yamamoto S/S 1983



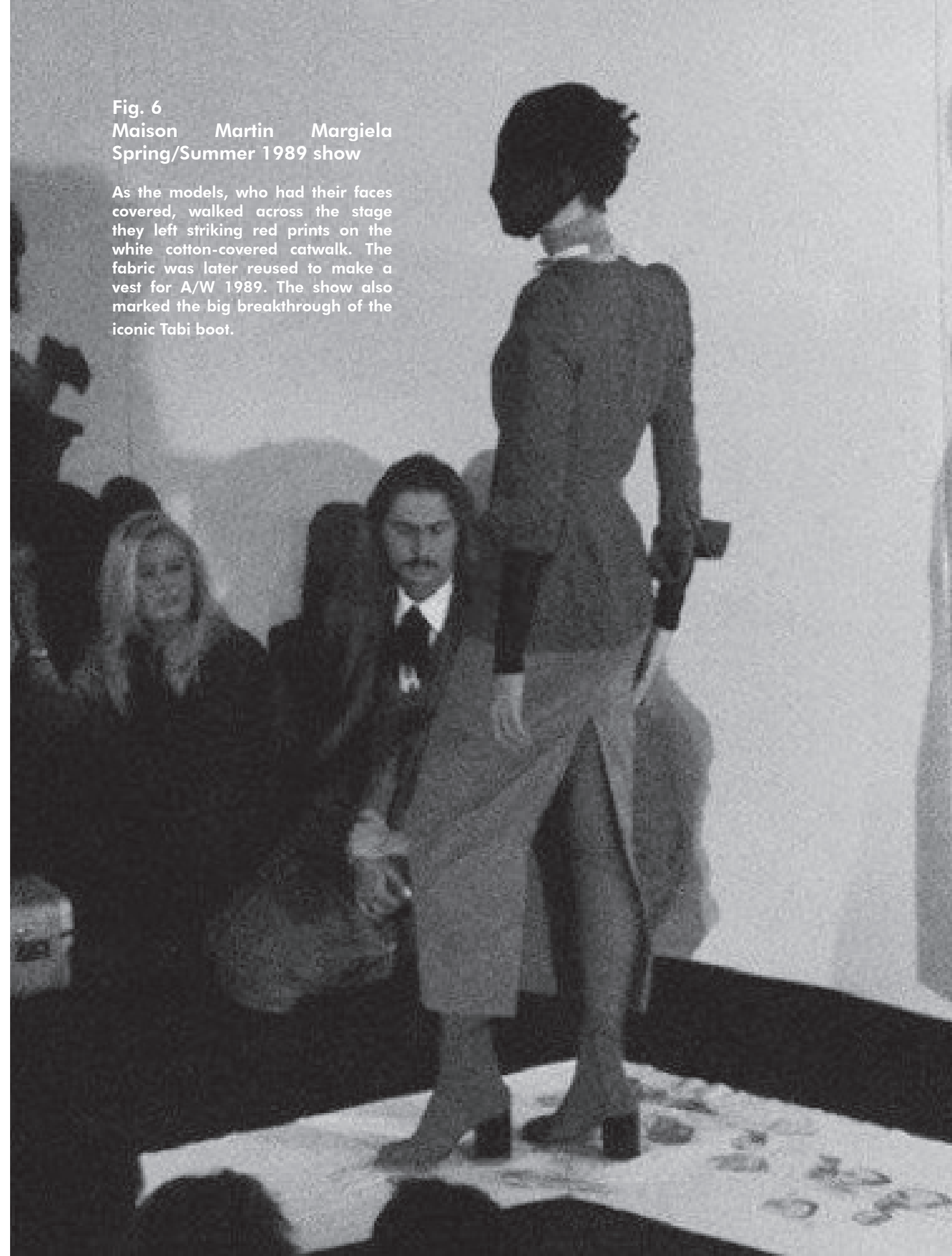
Deconstruction in fashion

The fashion world was equally disrupted and revolutionized by following a similar concept. The Belgian designer Martin Margiela revolted against the excessive and unimaginative tendencies in fashion, which were dominating the 80s, by reworking old clothing and reshaping their old structures: a way of creating clothes that had never been seen in high fashion runways. With his first runway show, Margiela did not only disintegrate traditional dress structures, subverting established notions of design, but he also deconstructed the system that produced the clothing. (Skivko, M., 2020) In fact, the term deconstruction was applied to fashion by Bill Cunningham in an article he published in the magazine *Details* to describe Martin Margiela's autumn/winter 1989/90 collection, which was shown in Paris in March 1989 in a graffiti-marked demolition site. (Cunningham, B., 1990)

Retrospectively this term was heavily used to identify the works of a group of fashion designers, which, though in a different cultural context, are known for defeating traditional norms and Eurocentric views in fashion: Paris, 1981, Japanese designers Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto introduced their collections of "clothing that resembled spoiled, ripped or torn shrouds, layer over layer of sad-looking black drapes" worn by models "with pale pancake make-up, bruised-looking lips, and disheveled hair". (English B., 2011, p. ?). By rejecting bold glamor and "fashionable" silhouettes that, mostly for women, were designed to accentuate the body, these fashion designers started to deconstruct the parameters of what was in fashion and questioned Western beauty and cultural standards, which had dominated the Fashion System for centuries. (Loscialpo, F., 2012) It is clear that the doubting of pre-existing orders and notions is fundamental in these design approaches: deconstruction becomes visible, in the sense of forms and techniques, but it is equally present in the intellectual process of creating fashion. [ibid]. In the next chapters, I will further elaborate on deconstruction in fashion through the case studies of three designers, who brought the philosophical concept into the fashion system, to understand its consequences on postmodern society and perception of fashion.

Fig. 6
Maison Martin Margiela
Spring/Summer 1989 show

As the models, who had their faces covered, walked across the stage they left striking red prints on the white cotton-covered catwalk. The fabric was later reused to make a vest for A/W 1989. The show also marked the big breakthrough of the iconic Tabi boot.



02 EVOLUTION OF FASHION AND ITS CONSUMPTION-DRIVEN VOCATION

Fashion is both the mirror and motor of socio-cultural evolution (Evans, C., 2003). This chapter explores the growth of consumption, particularly in fashion, which has become increasingly prominent over the last century, and examines how our consumer habits impact the fashion system.

Fashion can be defined as a system of signs and symbols that can communicate meaning within a social context, making it an abstract notion that resembles language with its own semantic code (Barthes, R., 1967). Clothing, on the other hand, refers to the physical garments and accessories people wear for practical purposes (Kawamura, Y., 2008). It is crucial to differentiate between fashion and clothing, as they are often perceived as synonyms. The fashion system begins with the physical garment and its manufacturing but extends beyond its material existence to create a complex network of meanings (Barthes, R., 2006).

The birth of a mass society and the rise of consumer

culture has significantly influenced both clothing and fashion, transforming the first into a desirable commodity and the second into a powerful socio-cultural force and a key player in shaping identities and social dynamics (Reith, G., 2019).

Therefore, the fashion system not only reflects current societal trends but also drives changes by introducing new styles, values, and cultural narratives. This dynamic interaction between fashion and society underscores the importance of understanding how consumer habits influence the evolution of the Fashion System.

By examining the growth of consumption in fashion, it becomes evident that our purchasing behaviors and the symbolic meanings we attach to clothing play a pivotal role in the broader cultural and social landscape. This exploration will reveal the intricate relationship between material garments and the abstract concept of fashion, highlighting how they together shape and are shaped by contemporary society.



Fig. 9
The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan constructed by architect Giuseppe Mengoni between 1865 and 1877, is Italy's oldest active shopping gallery.

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter of my thesis represents an investigation of the current Fashion System and its consumption-driven capitalism model. To understand the dynamics and the theories behind the ever-growing consumerist model on which the fashion industry is based on, I start from studying sociological theories of consumerism in fashion. which offered the basis and the theoretical framework of my research. Then, I translate these theories into our contemporary society and individuate the first paradigm of fashion, which is disposable fashion.

The literature that was taken into consideration was used to gain knowledge of classical sociological theories for consumerism, which are long-term and historical. Peter Corrigan’s book “The Sociology of Consumption” (1997) offered an introduction to key social theories for consumerism, especially in fashion. From here further academic articles about the key classical theorists such as Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen and Georg Simmel examined. It emerged that consumerism in fashion, historically shows the competition between social classes and the representation of social status. The concept of conspicuous consumption, which emerged from Veblen’s theory, was analyzed as a substitute for violent actions to gain prestige in our society. (Patsiaouras, G., Fitchett, J., 2012). Georg Simmel’s To contextualize these theories, research about the historical evolution of consumer society was led, focusing on the industrial period and the birth of mass society through capitalism. (Goodwin, N., et. al, 2008) Georg Simmel’s theory, which was later named “trickle- down” theory (Fallers, L.,1971), assesses how fashion spreads among different

social groups through processes of emulation and differentiation, leading to a cycle of consumption, given from the desire of emulating the upper class, and the consequent strive of differentiation of the latter, which intensified with the birth of mass society and industrial capitalism.

Coming into the contemporary fashion industry, I want to explore how these classical theories are reflected in our current society. By reviewing articles about changes in the fashion supply chain (Google Scholar, Science Direct) and articles it emerges that fashion has adopted a fast fashion production model and trend cycle, which leads to the constant change in styles and a consequent overconsumption of clothing (Barnes, L., Lea-Greenwood, G., 2008). This cycle is reconnectable to the “trickle-down” theory, as fast fashion runs on emulating the latest trends set by high fashion. Gerda Reiths book “Addictive Consumption: Capitalism, Modernity and Excess” furtherly highlights how consumption-driven capitalism perpetuates desires that lead to excessive, addictive consumption.

Further literature points to the fact that conspicuous consumption is still relevant and furtherly spread to lower social classes because of the phenomenon of “luxury democratization”. (Rosendo-Rios, V., Shukla P., 2023) Due to the high competitiveness created by this this phenomenon, high fashion has adapted to a mass market production, perpetuating the vicious cycle of consumption-driven capitalism, increasing social inequality and environmental damage. (Schor, J., 2002; D’Aveni, R., 2020)

Document Included (Typology)	Academic Articles, Book Chapters, Scientific Articles
Time Horizon	1899 - 2023
Keywords	Consumerism, Fashion, Industrialization, Mass Society

Table 2. Criteria for texts selection

2.1

Originis of fashion consumerism

First, I want to investigate the social causes of consumerism, and how they shaped our consumer habits. What is the motor that brings people to overconsume nonnecessary goods? Since, as individuals, we are heavily influenced by one another, the cause lies in society and the relationships and positions within it.

Starting from classical theory, the economist Max Weber (1905) studied the development of capitalism and how consumer goods influence the competition between social classes. (Corrigan, P., 1995) Ever since the class system started to exist, material goods have always symbolized social status and wealth; clothing especially made it easy to publicly identify the social position of an individual, concretizing it and making it visible to everyone. [Ibid]

Starting from the II century, there were worldwide

sumptuary laws, especially regarding dress code, that led to strong signaling of the public status of an individual and reinforcement of the social hierarchy. "The way by which our laws attempt to regulate idle and vain expenses in meat and clothes seems to be quite contrary to the end designed... For to enact that none but princes shall eat turbot, shall wear velvet or gold lace, and interdict these things to the people, what is it but to bring them into a greater esteem, and to set everyone more agog to eat and wear them?" Michel de Montaigne, 1572

Mass consumerism is theorized to be indeed rooted in social competition, which rocketed in Europe during the XVI century in England; it is at this time that essential consumerism evolved into what we can today consider "fashion". (Corrigan, P., 1995) Queen Elizabeth I wanted to centralize her

regime, by making it the mirror of her political power. To do so she forced the nobility to come directly to London and show their honors, to gain the court's favors. Therefore, the aristocrats were put in competition and were forced to always buy the newest, most prestigious items to stand out and receive the queen's attention. They were attracted into an "orgy of consumerism" (McCracken, G., 1988, p.13). It is here that the concept of "fashion" really spread, as new objects and clothing were necessary to keep up with everyone else and to "be seen", creating a vicious cycle of competition and consumerism. (ibid)

The theory that consumer goods and their uses indicate a differentiation in social classes, was further investigated by sociologist Thorstein Veblen. According to him the social power of an individual is based on his financial capability, and to demonstrate that one must consume to show off his wealth, with frivolous and flashy objects (e.g. men who used walking sticks for show, and women who bought silver flatware despite the effectiveness of cheaper aluminum utensils). (Veblen, T., 1899) This phenomenon is called "Conspicuous Consumption", a term coined by Veblen in 1899: in every culture, consumer behavior is influenced by the desire to publicly display goods with the goal of social membership through the possession of status symbols. (Patsiaouras, G., Fitchett J., 2012). According to Veblen, this is to substitute the "honor" and "respect" that violent actions during war conferred to individuals in barbaric, pre-civilized societies, where violence was the main way to gain social status. With the arrival of what Veblen described as "later barbarism", the recognition and attribution of status according to the aggressive behavior of the members of the community was replaced by the acquisition of goods. (Veblen, T., 1899)



Fig. 10 Italian fashion c. 1300, across all levels of society. Illustration of Albert Kretschmer (1825–1891), German painter and costume designer, from his book, *Costumes of All Nations* (1882)



Fig. 11 'Ermine Portrait' attributed to William Segar of Elizabeth I of England, 1585

2.2

Mass society: the spread of fashion in a consumption-driven capitalistic fashion system

Briefly, consumption and the display of material goods is, even in our modern society, a form of honor and social recognition, to be superior to others, and has violent connotations. (Veblen, T., 1899)

But how did this desire for superiority spread to the masses?

According to Georg Simmel, at the start of the 20th century, this way of consumption, which was restricted to the elite, “trickled down” to the masses, thanks to the phenomenon of emulation. (Simmel, G., 1904)

This was catalyzed by the capitalistic system that was developing in the last centuries: with the Industrial Revolution occurred a transformation in production and, consequently, consumption. The start of large-scale industrialization can be observed in the textile industry in Britain in the early 1800s; the amount of cotton used to produce garments rose from less than 3 million pounds in 1760 to more than 360 million pounds annually in the 1830s. About two-thirds of this increased output was sold to areas such as India, a British colony whose formerly advanced textile industry was destroyed by the colonizers. (Goodwin, N., et. al, 2008) Indeed, the rise of capitalism in Europe was not a self-generated process, but rather a result of years of colonialism and imperialism. (Blaut, J., 1989). As the Western countries evolved, also by exploiting colonies in the Global South and East, other industries followed; the production increased even more and it became inevitable to sell the growing output at home or to other “developed” countries. (Goodwin, N., et. al, 2008)

Mass production required mass consumption and the birth of a consumer society; Over the course of the 19th century, both the growing middle class and the working class, not just the elite, became consuming classes as well. (Simmel, G., 1904) And it is here that conspicuous consumption was not restricted to the elite anymore, because everyone had a sort of economic power and seemingly had the possibility of climbing up to a higher social class.

In this social and economic landscape, Simmel came up with a vertical model of diffusion of fashion; what later was called the “trickle-down effect” (Fallers, L., 1971) implied that fashion permeated from the higher social classes to the lowest in a pyramidal system in a continuous imitation process, in which each status is a reference for the one below. Once the consumer good of the upper class has been acquired by many members of the lower classes, it becomes trivialized, because it is no longer able to signal a certain social level and is therefore gradually abandoned. The need then arises to introduce a new good, or just a new prestigious social meaning, which thus allows this vicious circle. (Simmel, G., 1904)



Fig. 12 Workers at American Woolen Co., 1935, Photography by Margaret Bourke-White:



Roses:

A social hypothesis

In this essay, Simmel describes an utopian society where the right to breed roses was reserved to a small group of society, thus breeding roses was an indication of success and superiority. Striving for success, the people wanted to obtain the right to grow roses and protested to gain it:

after a time of revolution everyone was allowed to grow roses. Now, in order to stand out, everyone was breeding more and more sophisticated strains of roses; with time people realized that breeding roses was no longer a sign of success.

Fig. 13 “Roses: A social hypothesis” is an essay by Georg Simmel, which was published in the journal “Jugend” in 1897; it is a metaphor for the process of changes in fashion and taste. Source: © Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg

2.3

Fostering a vicious cycle: rise of disposable fashion

The process of emulation and differentiation introduced by Simmel brings us to our modern society and mainstream fashion. How did it come to the cycle of trends we are currently witnessing? Why does a major part of the population constantly buy new things?

Nowadays, as individuals we engage with fashion in very different ways and are exposed to various styles that are very different from one another (e.g. street styles, luxury brands, casual business, etc.), which are simultaneously in fashion and are destined to change very quickly (Black, S., 2008). Since society and consumer habits evolved, fashion drastically transformed and is nowadays a multi-fragmented business.

In 2023, the global fashion industry was estimated to be worth \$1.7 trillion. And more than 300 million people all over the world work on clothes, somewhere along the value chain. From 2000 to 2014, clothing production doubled, and the number of garments purchased per capita increased by about 60 percent. (McKinsey, 2023) We can say that nowadays consumption is a global force that plays a central and necessary role in our lives. (Reith G., 2018) Different processes and dynamics of globalization, standardization of production, and capitalization brought to what the Fashion System is today: it is saturated with different brands and retailers that speed up the production cycles and aim for the consumers to quickly buy whatever they desire, and cheaply. (McKinsey, 2023)

Since the 1990s, retailers started focusing on expanding their product range with updated products and faster responsiveness to the 'newness' of the fashion trends instead of only cost efficiencies for manufacturing

(Barnes, L., Lea-Greenwood, G., 2008) Along with this fashion shows and catwalks began to be documented and publicly displayed, leading to the demystification of high fashion, now open to the public. Retailers such as Zara, H&M, Mango, New Look, and TopShop could then adopt these designs rapidly and introduce their products to the stores in a minimum of three weeks and at a very accessible price. (ibid)

In 2023 this process of emulation and hyperproduction is even more widespread and fast: retailers like Shein come up with 10,000 designs a day immediately available to the public, which can purchase whatever with just one click. (BoF, 2023).

We can reconnect this with luxury democratization and "Zarafication" (D'Aveni, R., 2010). The latter is a concept introduced in 2010 when the fast fashion brand Zara started to heavily influence the entire fashion market: with its innovative mass-production processes and sourcing strategies to bring new designs to the market, the Spanish brand set a new standard for low- and middle- end competitors, but also for high-end designers which are forced to adapt to these new dynamics. (D'Aveni, R., 2010) What further characterizes luxury democratization is the consumption behavior of developed vs. developing countries: there is a significantly greater influence of status signaling through luxury goods among consumers in less wealthy markets compared to those in developed economies. (Eisend, M. et al., 2017) Overt signaling of luxury is seen as a visible symbol of newfound wealth, in fact, lower- and middle-class consumers eager to rise the social ladder account for nearly half of the luxury goods market globally. (Shukla, P. et al., 2021)



Fig. 17 "Happy Victims", Photography series by Kyoichi Tsuzuki, 2008

This shift in the target of luxury products, to create the illusion that luxury is accessible to all, has negative effects on the quality of high-end brands, which give into mass production techniques and use lower-cost materials. (Shukla, P. et al., 2021) It also increases consumerism, as a decoy for the aspiring middle class to be part of the rich elite, while in fact, luxury product prices are only increasing and accessible to a small percentage of people who “have far too much money and far too little moral or social accountability in terms of what they do with it” (Schor, J., 2003, p. 51)

In conclusion the paradigm of disposable fashion is given from today’s desire to “fit in”, to vertically

emulate higher social classes and horizontally imitate each other, which has never been so high now that everyone can strive for it.

In the context of this consumerism model, mainstream fashion quickly becomes obsolete and disposable, once the lower class adapts a high-class style and goes out of fashion. (Philip, R. et al., 2020) This process of trend diffusion is characteristic of a hierarchical class system, where there are also instances of trends “trickling up”. This is exemplified in the case of subcultural movements and styles gaining widespread acceptance within society. (Mohr, I. et al., 2021) We can observe this phenomenon in the growing trend of sustainability, which will be the focus of my exploration in the following chapter.



GUCCI

GUESS

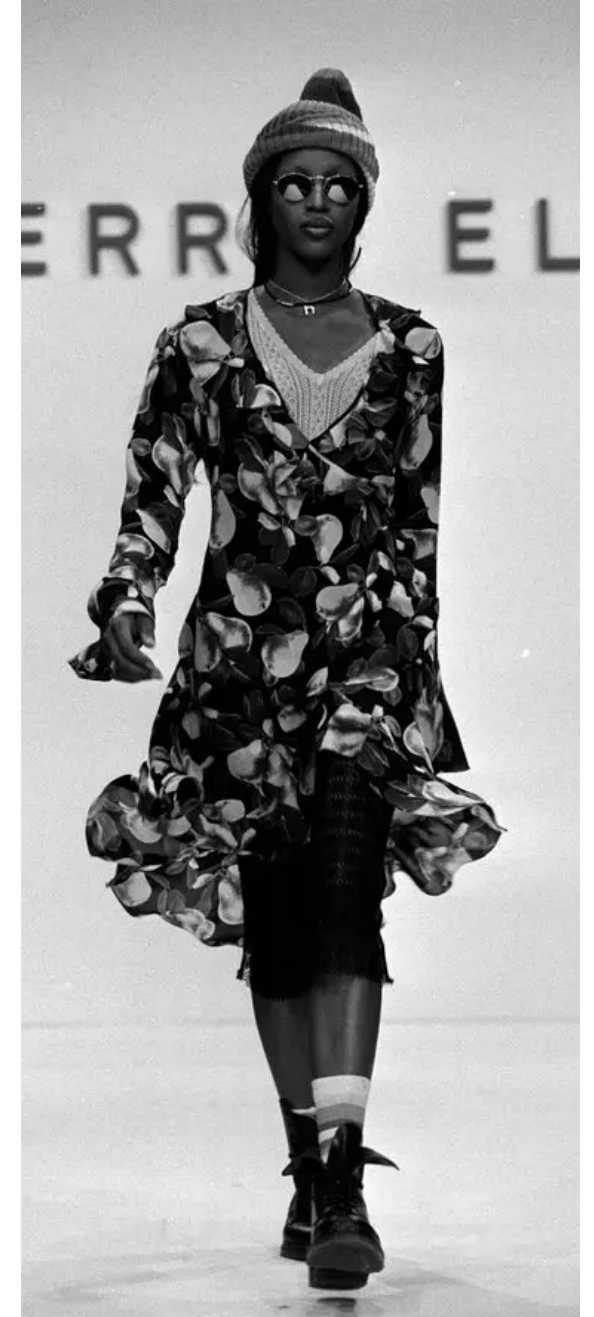
Fig. 14

In 2009 Gucci sued the American brand for deliberately copying 5 of their trademarks, including the interlocking GG logo. It was found that, apart from the obvious aesthetic similarities, the timing chosen for the launch of Guess’ products (immediately after the presentation of Gucci’s collections) revealed the former’s intention to follow Gucci’s footprints systematically to offer to the public products with a similar style at a lower price.

Fig. 15 Kurt Cobain, 1990



Fig. 16 Marc Jacobs for Perry Ellis, S/S1993



In 1993 Marc Jacobs, then creative director of the American sportswear brand Perry Ellis, designed a collection inspired by the Seattle grunge scene. “Two-dollar second-hand flannel shirts were translated into plaid-printed silks, lumberjack thermals were re-imagined in cashmere and Kurt Cobain’s floral granny dress was turned into floaty chiffon, worn with untied DMs or duchesse-satin Converse.” (Dazed, 2013) From then on “grunge style” became more and more popular, becoming a fashion trend in the early 2010s, even if disconnected from the 90s musical subculture.

03 THE FASHION PARADOX: *professing sustainability in a capitalistic loop*

Having explored the first paradigm of our Fashion System, fast and disposable fashion, it is important to recognize that in recent decades a new paradigm has emerged: sustainable fashion (McKinsey, 2020). This "countermovement" to the damaging attitude of consumerism reflects society's growing awareness of the environmental impacts of consumption. Consequently, environmentally friendly initiatives, regulations, and brands are increasingly emerging. Nonetheless, the production and consumption of fashion remain at their highest levels, with the fashion industry being one of the most prominent and fast-growing sectors today (Business of Fashion, 2023).

The contemporary global landscape of fashion, shaped by an intricate interplay of contradictions—including personal attitudes towards fashion, economic factors, production methods, and cultural identities—can be defined by the term "Fashion Paradox," coined by Professor Sandy Black (Black, S., 2008). In her book of the same name, she poses a question that I seek to investigate: How is it possible that rising concerns about sustainability and increasing consumerism coexist?

This paradox underscores the complexity of the modern fashion industry. On one hand, there is a strong push towards sustainability, with

consumers brands and governmental organizations alike prioritizing eco-friendly practices, ethical production, and reduced environmental impact (McKinsey, 2020). On the other hand, as our population evolves, the constant demand for new, trendy clothing drive mass production and consumption at unprecedented rates (BoF, 2023).

Understanding this paradox involves examining the multifaceted nature of consumer behavior and industry practices. The public is often caught between the desire for sustainable products and the appeal of fashion consumption. Additionally, economic factors such as affordability and accessibility of fast fashion play a significant role in purchasing decisions (Barnes, L., Lea-Greenwood, G., 2006). Cultural identities and social influences further complicate this landscape, as fashion remains a powerful means of self-expression and social positioning (Black, S., 2008).

By investigating the coexistence of sustainability concerns and rising consumerism, we can gain insight into the broader socio-cultural and economic forces at play.

This exploration will reveal the challenges and opportunities within the fashion industry as it navigates the delicate balance between environmental responsibility and market demands.



Fig. 18 Can Fashion change the world?

T-Shirt by designer Katherine Hamnett standing with the people of Ukraine

3.0

Materials and Methods

In this chapter, I analyze the phenomenon of sustainability: conventionally seen as an opposite direction to fast fashion and consumerism, sustainable fashion is currently shaping the fashion system and its most influencing brands. The methodology used is the deconstruction of the matter of sustainability, opposed to the previously identified paradigm of disposable fashion, questioning its nature in contrast to consumerism, to investigate if our current fashion system is actually sustainable.

I started by exploring the origins of sustainability in fashion to individuate the motivations behind it. The book “Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox” (2008) by Sandy Black was used as the basis of this chapter as it thoughtfully gives insights into the dynamics of sustainability in the intricate system of modern fashion, mapping some pioneering brands that advocated sustainable fashion. Other academic articles were taken into consideration to explain the rise of sustainable thinking in fashion and, more generally, in design. Ezio Manzini’s article “Design, Environment and Social Quality: From “Existenzminimum” to “Quality Maximum” (1994), explains the superficial view of environmentalism and sustainability during the 1980s, and how instead design should drive to enhance social quality by promoting more equitable and fulfilling lifestyles, not limited to material consumption and economic growth. Furthermore, the notion of sustainable development, first mentioned in the Brundtland Report, was explored to delineate the political scenario of the sustainable discourse, and to represent the “ideals” of sustainability, acknowledged worldwide. Exploring the policies and regulations that are set to reach sustainable development, we see how the fashion industry is trying to contribute to it. Seeing the evolution of sustainable fashion we arrive at our contemporaneity

where sustainability has become a mega trend and an imperative for successful fashion brands, according to various trend reports and journal articles (Forbes, Business of Fashion, Deloitte).

The second part focuses on the new consumer habits shaped by the sustainability trend, especially affecting the new elite. For this part, the main literature reviewed was on the Business of Fashion, as it provides information and data on the current fashion landscape. Other literature such as book chapters and academic articles was reviewed on Google Scholar. By reviewing various literature on the so-called “aspirational class” (Currid-Halkett, E., 2017), we come across the concept of inconspicuous consumption, the quiet and subtle consumption of goods, and how it is a new form of consumerism and social competition. In the third part, I critically analyze the industry’s approach to sustainability and prove how it actually has become, paradoxically, a marketing strategy to sell more products. The white paper “The Great Green Washing Machine Part 1: Back to the Roots of Sustainability” released by the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights in 2021 was reviewed as a trustful source of the “hidden” side of brand-driven sustainability today and its implication for the global south. The second part of the white paper, released in 2022 “The Great Green Washing Machine Pt.2: The Use and Misuse of Sustainability Metrics in Fashion”, explores how the metrics to assert the environmental impact of a garment are not accurate, thus proving that brands are inflating their sustainability claims. In conclusion, the notion of “commodity fetishism”, reviewed in Karl Marx’s “Capital”, is used to represent the consumer’s approach toward “ecological” products in a capitalistic society, pointing out that due to the mysticism around their production consumers are more attracted to products marketed as sustainable.

Document Included (Typology)	Book Chapters, Scientific & Academic articles, Surveys, Journal reports
Time Horizon	1994 - 2024
Keywords	Sustainability, Consumers, Greenwashing,

Table 3. Criteria for texts selection

3.1

The rise of sustainable fashion

How did the sustainable movement in fashion begin?

Environmental concerns and sustainability discourse have a long history, which is parallel of that of anthropological evolution, since human activity is inevitably connected with the use of natural resources (Perkins Marsh, G., 1864).

Acknowledging these previous forms of sustainability, this chapter will focus on sustainable fashion as a phenomenon which emerged from the 60s and 70s, collateral to a more and more industrialized and globalized society. Starting from the hippie movement in the late 60s, rooted in politics and anti-war ideas, we can see the emergence of fashion which expresses a connection and appreciation of nature, characterized by wearing hand-crafted clothing and natural materials. Nonetheless, this sort of lifestyle was not accepted by mainstream society and was seen as an “alternative” way of living (Black, S., 2008).

Starting from the late 80’s a sort of environmental consciousness started to rise, as a reaction to the bold excesses of the past decades. (ibid) We can reconnect this time with a “normalization” of ecological design, a common acceptance and demand for environmental quality. Nonetheless this shift was only superficial, and was framed within the context of a wealthy, industrialized society. Thus, the goal of ecological design strategies, which were strictly technical, wasn’t transforming society and consumer habits. (Manzini, E., 1994)

The discourse about sustainability became more and more prominent within politics and social causes, moving away from simple environmentalism, introducing the concept of

“sustainable development”: this term was coined by the World Commission on Environment and Development, in the Brundtland Report (1987), and defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. (Jeronen, E., 2013) After three years of assembly between experts on technology, science and political policy-makers, the report stated that sustainability wasn’t only environmental, but concerned four dimensions: society, environment, culture, and economy.

From then on, the debate on sustainable development only intensified, with the creation of Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action that aimed to spur sustainable development and make it enforceable in different countries. The report promoted a holistic approach to sustainability, taking human welfare and environmental causes in consideration, stating that “humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our wellbeing” (Agenda 21, 1992, p.3). It also exposed the inequity between developed and developing nations, stating that the consumption of the richer segments (20% of the population) and their “unsustainable lifestyle” is the main cause of environmental issues and inequality in the world. (Agenda 21, 1992, p.18)

The strive for sustainable development was concretized in 8 fundamental values, the UN Millenium Development goals, following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000.

No poverty
Zero hunger
Good health and well-being
Quality education
Gender equality
Clean water and sanitation
Affordable and clean energy
Decent work and economic growth
Industry, innovation and infrastructure
Reduced inequalities
Sustainable cities and communities
Responsible consumption & production
Climate action
Life below water
Life on land
Peace, justice, and strong institutions
Partnerships for the goals

Returning to fashion, while materialism and conspicuous consumption were still very prominent, the late 1980s and early 90's saw the rise of companies like Patagonia (founded in 1973) that promoted ethical fashion, supported by the connection to nature and outdoor life. Another pioneer of eco-friendly companies was Esprit, which launched their "Ecollection" in 1994, the first "complete ecological clothing line distributed by a major corporation", designed by Lynda Grose. The collection was composed of naturally colored organic cotton, wool and linen, Tencel and sourced buttons and jewelry handmade by artisans in Ghana. (Black, S., 2008, p. 23)

The first appearance of sustainability in luxury fashion was through Stella McCartney, who launched her label in 2001 joint with Kering Group. Ever since the first collection, which was fully vegan, the environmental narrative is the core of the brand. Strictly against the use of real leather or fur and prioritizing materials like organic cotton and recycled polyester, McCartney advocates for eco-friendly



Fig. 19 1992 brochure page detailing the Esprit Ecollection

and ethically sourced garments and to this day she has become a center figure for sustainable luxury fashion. (Forbes, 2015)

In 2007 designer Kate Fletcher started the "slow fashion" movement that sought to shift the fashion industry towards a more mindful approach that values people, planet, and long-term well-being over short-term profits and disposable consumption. Comparing standardized clothing to McDonald's, the author highlights how economic growth wasn't making society wealthier. (Fletcher K., 2010) Another milestone in the sustainable movement is Fashion Revolution, founded in 2013 as a reaction to the Rana Plaza disaster, an eight-story garment factory building in Bangladesh, which collapsed causing in the death of 1,134 people. (BBC, 2013) The movement advocates for fair wages, safe working conditions, and environmentally friendly practices in fashion production, encouraging brands to ensure transparency of their supply chain. As the term "sustainable" gained popularity and

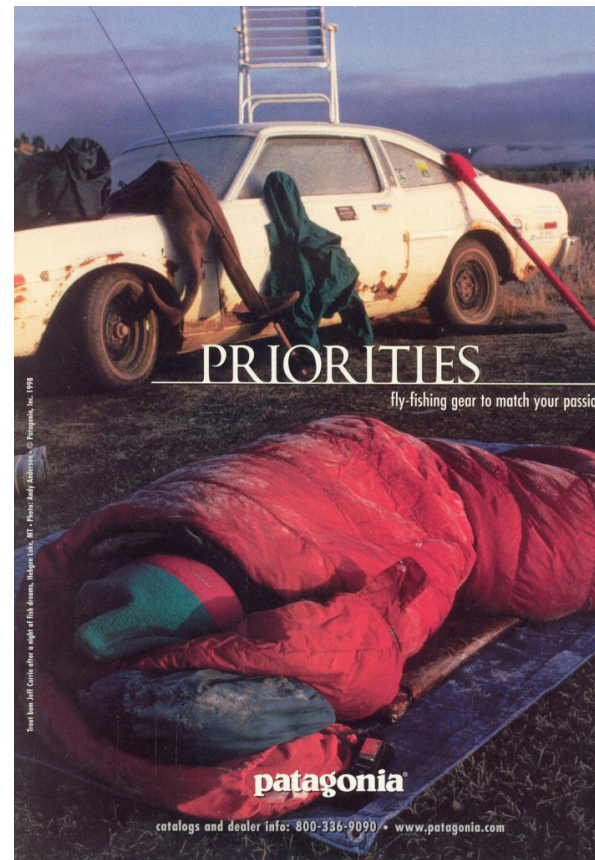


Fig.20 Patagonia advertisement, 1998

entered the collective mindset of society, driven by small businesses and pioneer designers (e.g. Kate Fletcher and Lynda Grose), more and more initiatives for an "ethical" fashion production and consumption emerged in the marketplace and in mainstream fashion. For example, fast fashion brands like Topshop and Primark joined the Ethical Trading Initiative and claimed to adopt corporate social responsibility, by monitoring and improving the conditions of their garment manufacturers. (Black, S., 2008) In 2010 H&M launched their "conscious collection" made with organic cotton and recycled polyester (H&M Annual Report, 2017). Sustainability, especially in fashion, was identified as a mega-trend in the late 2010's (Mittelstaedt, J.D.

et al., 2014), becoming one of the most important luxury trends in 2018, according to a Forbes article with the slogan "green is the new black". (Sim, H., 2018) The figure of the sustainability expert among big fashion houses has become fundamental: major fashion brands are hiring sustainability experts, to create sustainability strategies and mitigate concerns about the fashion industry's negative impact on the environment (ibid).

In summary, sustainability has become, throughout the years, a very important matter in fashion, and a trend among companies, which we can say "trickled-up" from countermovements (hippies in the '70s, small fashion brands etc.) to mainstream fashion business. (Mohr, I. et al., 2021)



Fig.21 Stella McCartney S/S 2024 Campaign, starring eco-activist and model Cara Delevingne, shot at the Veolia recycling plant in South London

3.2

The emergence of inconspicuous consumption

As a result of the rising sustainability trend, consumer habits and mindset, especially amongst young generations, have changed. (Anna Granskog, A., 2020, BoF)

As a new “leisure class”, that tends to express their richness through cultural capital and “quiet” purchases, such as expensive vegan alternatives, organic cotton garments, arises, there is a new way to shape social distinctions and hierarchy. (Currid-Halkett, E., 2017). We can say that nowadays consumption has become hidden, or inconspicuous. As it is more subtle, at first this shift in consumer habits may seem more sustainable, but the truth is that it is still rooted in social distinction through material purchases: inconspicuous consumption (which also includes education, cultural experiences etc.) reinforces inequality, as it is very inaccessible to lower social classes. (Ibid)

As I analyzed in the second chapter (2.3), an analysis showed that overt signaling of luxury (e.g. big logos) is more prominent in poorer countries, while covert signaling of status can be found in wealthier, privileged countries. (Eisend, M. et al., 2017) The shift towards understated luxury in

the fashion industry began in 2007 in response to the economic crisis. (Shukla, P., Khalifa, D., 2024) The recent trend of “quiet luxury”, which involves purchasing timeless, high-quality items with a classic and elegant style, rather than flashy displays of wealth, favoring subtle designs over ostentatious ones, is a perfect example of today's inconspicuous consumption mode. (ibid)

At first glance quiet luxury seems to represent a shift in consumer mindset towards more sustainable and responsible consumption habits, as it theoretically puts an emphasis on investing in classic pieces made from quality materials, that are meant to last for a long time. But as this aesthetic has become a trend it has led to increased consumption, as evidenced by surging sales at brands embodying this aesthetic (e.g. Zegna's 65M€ profit in 2022). (Business of Fashion, 2023)

In addition, paradoxically, this trend has been emulated by mass market brands, like Zara, H&M and even Shein, reinforcing the fast fashion paradigm. (Business of Fashion, 2023)

Quiet-Luxury Pieces Under \$300? These Minimalist-Outfit Formulas Are Surprisingly Affordable

BY LAURA JACKSON
January 19, 2024

Fig.22 VOGUE article headline (2024) presenting affordable "Quiet Luxury" pieces, including H&M trench coat and TOTEME leggings.

This article proves that brands jumped on the trend of quiet luxury, to sell an ideal lifestyle and increase sales.

Source: <https://www.vogue.com/article/affordable-minimalist-outfits>

Overt vs. covert luxury signaling



Fig.23 Louis Vuitton Men's Ready To Wear A/W 2018



Fig.24 Zegna Men's Ready To Wear A/W 2024

3.3

Greenwashing and “Green” commodity fetishism: the financial value of sustainability

Nowadays, the term “sustainability” is ubiquitous in the fashion industry, even if its meaning is not very clear nor legally significant. (Bates-Kassatly, V., Baumann-Pauly, D., 2021) In 2019, the ethical fashion market reached a worth of \$6,85 billion. (The Business Research Company, 2020)

As analyzed before, the sustainable movement is shaped by various regulations, organizations, institutions, and big corporations. In 2021 the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights released a white paper that called out fashion brands for not accurately following the assessed concept of sustainable development. Sustainability as a marketing strategy is adopted by major brands, due to today’s hyper-awareness of climate change and the bad reputation of the fashion industry as a contributor to pollution and exploitation of workers.

This accusation is of course bad for business and profit, the main goal of today’s fashion brands, which responded with sustainability programs and



claims of environmental and social engagement. (Bates-Kassatly, V., Baumann-Pauly, D., 2021)

But are these promises true?

Mostly no, as the report shows, most brands follow a flawed definition of sustainability and only focus on environmental impact, rather than ending the poverty rate in the global south, where most farmers and garment workers involved in the current fashion industry operate. (ibid) In addition, brand-driven sustainability is flawed even in the narrow definition of environmental impact alone, as the data needed to make accurate comparative impact assertions simply does not exist. (Kassatly, V., Baumann-Pauly, D., 2022)

In an article, former COO of Timberland Kenneth P. Pucker further investigates the phenomenon of “greenwashing”: companies reporting on sustainability often can “actually be an obstacle to progress – consuming bandwidth, exaggerating gains, and distracting from the very real need for changes in mindsets, regulation, and corporate behavior.” (Kenneth P. Pucker, 2021)

The growth and profit paradigm of the fashion system has become intrinsic to sustainable marketing, as it helps to boost sales. (Mogensen, H., 2022) Helena Helmersson, H&M CEO, stated that their circular business model needs to be sustainable “... both when it comes to the planet impact, the people impact and also the profitable growth, before you can scale it” (Helmersson in Cernansky, 2022). This means that, when considering sustainability initiatives H&M evaluates profit and growth opportunities and the possibility of continuing to extract new resources.

Fig.25 Located just outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, Rana Plaza housed five clothing factories that produced garments for major international brands, including Benetton, Bonmarché, Primark, Walmart, Carrefour, and C&A. (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2017)

“Green” commodity fetish

The concept of using a sustainability narrative to boost sales is deeply linked to the concept of “commodity fetishism”: developed in Karl Marx’s ideology, this phenomenon is inevitable in a capitalistic society. Man-made products transform when they become a commodity for exchange. For example, when a garment is put on the market, we see it for its exchange value, alienated from its real production. (Marx, K., 1867)

We can clearly see this approach in “executional greenwashing” in the fashion business today: the use of nature evoking images in a brand’s advertisement and claiming that a product is sustainable because it has a percentage of natural materials confers a special

allure and mystical conception to objects. (Parguel, B. et al. , 2015) In this manner, the marketing of sustainable fashion deceives people into thinking they are buying special products, which are depicted to have almost magical properties, when in fact they are still contributing to fast fashion and consumerism. (Winge, T., 2015)

In conclusion, sustainable fashion marketing in the current industry perpetuates an illusion of social and environmental engagement and is being exploited to perpetuate the model of consumption-driven capitalism. Thus, sustainable efforts from consumers and small brands are not enough to make a change, as through greenwashing the sustainable value of fashion is relegated to its commercial worth.



Fig.26 H&M Conscious collection pop-up shop in 2015. Photo: Andrew H. Walker/Getty Images for H&M

* SURVEY FINDINGS

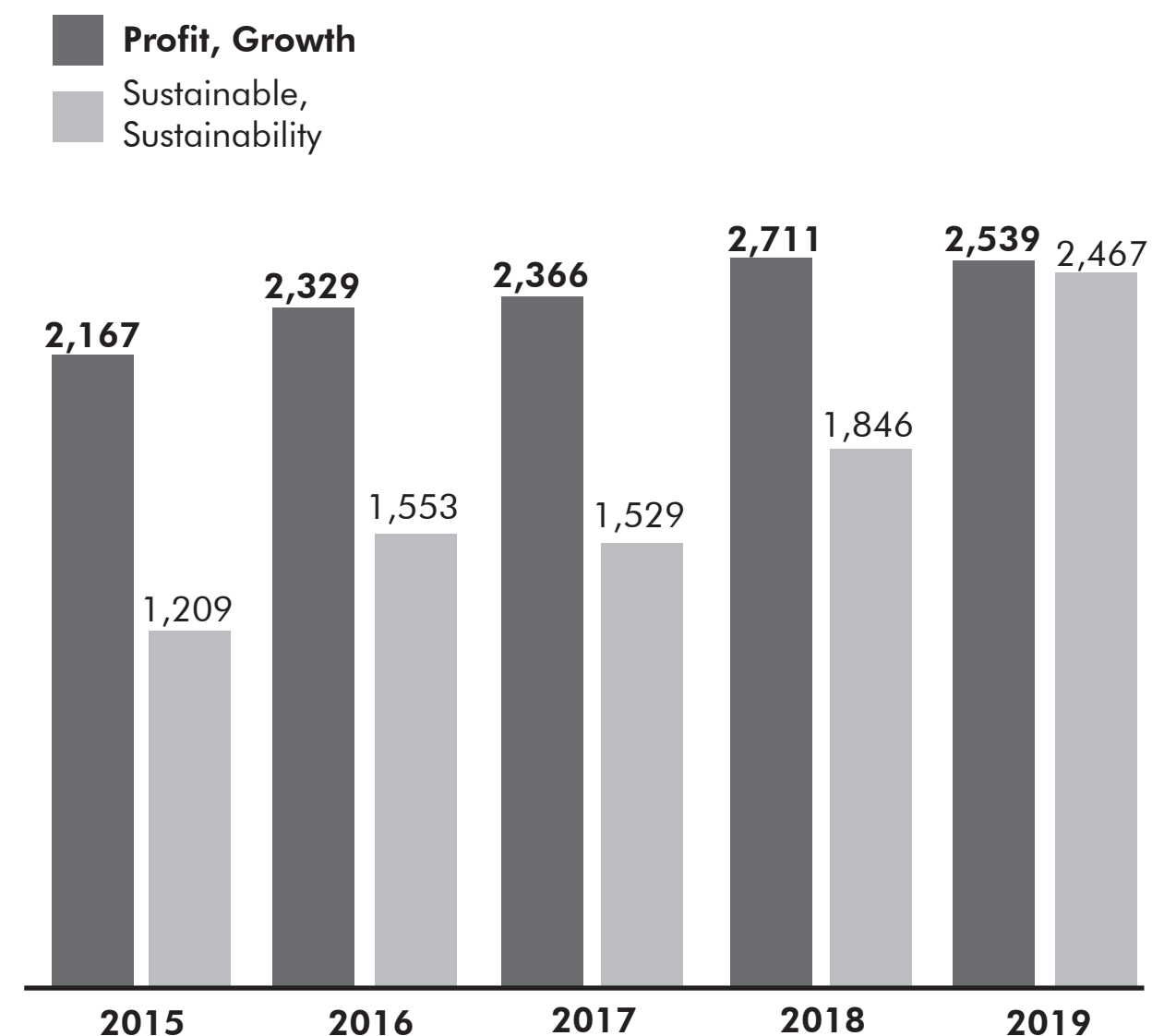
Various insights and surveys found on McKinsey and The Business of Fashion support the fact that sustainable claims heavily contribute to companies growth and sales boosts. According to The Sustainability Index 2021, published by The Business of Fashion (BoF) in March 2021 among fashion brands there is a correlation with the use of the word “sustainability” in marketing campaigns and profit growth.

Starting from 2019, when the “woke” trend really exploded (The State of Fashion 2019, McKinsey), companies started to respond by integrating environmental and social issues into their products. Fashion B- Companies, businesses which are certified to hold “high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability” (B-Lab) have doubled in just three years. (McKinsey, 2019).

The rising demand of sustainability from consumers, is studied by a 2019 survey by McKinsey (Grimmelt, A., Magni, M., Rodriguez, A., 2020): 1/3 of US Millennial and Gen-Z consumers say they’ll spend more on products that are less harmful to the environment, while in Europe, 2/3 of Millennials indicate they would stop or significantly reduce their spend on brands that mistreat employees. In addition, as sustainability has gone “mainstream” there has been an increase in environmental, social and governance funds, through which brands are trying to raise capital. (Nanda, M.C, BoF, 2021).

As a report published by the Global Fashion Agenda and BCG in 2019, “Pulse of the Fashion Industry”, shows, the fashion industry has been growing so much over the last decades that its impact on the planet is actually worsening year after year.

Number of times the words "Sustainability, Sustainable" are mentioned in the full years reports of the 15 companies assessed by the BoF 2021 Index



Source: BoF analysis, Companies annual reports, via Athos Capital

04 DECONSTRUCTION IN FASHION: *shaping new identities in a postmodern landscape*

After analyzing the two contrasting, yet interconnected, paradigms of the contemporary fashion industry, we arrive at the main theme of my thesis: the role of deconstruction in fostering sustainability in fashion. To contextualize this research, it is necessary to define the fashion landscape we inhabit, which I will characterize as "postmodern." But what is the condition of postmodernity?

Postmodernism is an ambiguous topic, viewed from various perspectives—concrete, like political and economic, or abstract, like philosophical and artistic. The editors of the architectural journal *PRECIS* 6 regard postmodernism as a legitimate reaction to modernism's vision of the world, which privileges absolute truths, rationality, social order, and the standardization of knowledge. In contrast, postmodernism values "heterogeneity and difference as liberative forces in the redefinition of cultural discourse" (Harvey, D., 1989, p.9).

There is a clear connection between deconstructivist philosophy and the postmodern condition: fragmentation, indeterminacy, and the disruption of all "universal or 'totalizing' discourses" are key elements (ibid). These values of deconstruction are fundamental in understanding how this way of thinking revolutionized the fashion scene, starting from the 1970s.

Deconstruction in fashion involves dismantling traditional garments and reassembling them in innovative ways, challenging conventional aesthetics and meanings (Skivko, M., 2020).

This approach aligns with postmodernism's emphasis on questioning established norms and embracing diversity and complexity. By applying deconstructionist principles, designers can create sustainable fashion that breaks away from the fast fashion model, promoting longevity, versatility, and ethical production methods (ibid).

In a postmodern context, deconstruction encourages consumers to reconsider their relationship with clothing, fostering a mindset that values quality over quantity and uniqueness over conformity (Gill, A., 1998). This shift is crucial for sustainability, as it reduces the demand for mass-produced, disposable fashion and supports more responsible consumption patterns.

Through my work, I aim to demonstrate how deconstruction not only transforms the aesthetics and functionality of fashion but also contributes to a more sustainable and conscious fashion industry, reflective of the fragmentation of the postmodern condition.



Fig. 27 Cindy Sherman, 2023

4.0

Materials and Methods

This chapter focuses on the matter of deconstruction in fashion, from its structural characteristics to the meanings behind it. To start, research on the Fashion System and its signs led to understanding it as a broader concept: fashion can be seen as a semiotic system, composed of signs, signified, and signifiers. (Barthes, R., 1967)

My goal is to explore how deconstruction acts on these signs, by disrupting its connections and changing its order. Moving beyond Barthes' semiotic framework, deconstructivist approaches highlight the fluidity, ambiguity, and ideological resistance that characterize today's fashion. The literature reviewed consisted mainly of academic articles and book chapters from fashion scholars and critics, that explore the theme of deconstruction in fashion. Flavia Loscialpo's "Fashion and Philosophical Deconstruction" (p.12-27) chapter in the book Fashion Forward, points to the fact that deconstruction in fashion can be recognized intellectually but also aesthetically. Coming into a more practical level, we see how deconstructivism in fashion is actually presented, through aesthetic practices and stylistic characteristics.

Deconstructivist fashion is marked by features that challenge conventional garment construction. As Skivko (2020) highlights, elements such as exposed seams, raw edges, and asymmetric details reveal the inner workings of garments, celebrating their handmade quality and challenging notions of perfection. This approach subverts the polished finishes typical of haute-couture clothing, inviting

a more critical engagement with the construction process.

To better understand this phenomenon and the various forms in which it has manifested in fashion I selected three designers and their pioneering works to use as case studies. As Adam Geczy, fashion scholar, writer, and artist, and Vicki Karaminas, professor and fashion academic, argue in their article "Time, Cruelty and Destruction in Deconstructivist Fashion: Kawakubo, Margiela and Vetements" (2020), three designers, in particular, are known for being pioneers of revolutionizing society's view of fashion and the fashioned body: "Kawakubo, together with Vivienne Westwood and Martin Margiela revolutionized fashion by turning their back on finery and preciousness in favour of a fundamentally aberrant sartorial language that suggested impoverishment, discontinuity and discord." [p.66]

To understand the design approach and philosophical meaning of their garments, I reviewed various literature, including book chapters, academic articles, and journal articles written by the main fashion academics that focus on deconstruction in fashion The research on these designers contextualizes their work within the broader historical and cultural movements of their time, to elucidate how each designer's interpretation of deconstructivism in fashion. For instance, Westwood's punk ideology is analyzed in relation to the political climate of 1970s Britain (Hebdige, D., Geczy A., Karaminas V.), Kawakubo's

and Yamamoto's works are placed within the framework of the Japanese avant-garde's impact on Western fashion norms (Kawamura Y., English B.), while Margiela is compared to a Victorian rag-picker, figuring in Baudelaire's "Fleurs du Mal"(1857). (Evans, C., Gill A.)

The methodological approach to the research is the application of deconstructivist theory to analyze how these designers' works challenge and deconstruct traditional fashion narratives and conventions. (Loscialpo, F.; Skivko, M.).

The key findings of this research are related to the disruption of traditional fashion norms related to gender, class, and garment construction. Their works are seen as pivotal in redefining what constitutes fashion and how it can be a medium for social and political commentary. The deconstructive approaches of these designers also have significant implications for sustainable and ethical fashion. By repurposing materials and challenging the concept of luxury, they promote a more conscious and less consumer-driven approach to fashion (Gill, A.; O'Shea, 1991). The influence of Westwood, Kawakubo, and Margiela on contemporary fashion is profound. Their pioneering work inspires new generations to explore deconstructive techniques and challenge established fashion norms, leading to ongoing innovation in the industry.(Geczy, A., Karaminas,V., 2020) This concept is further elaborated in the last chapter, which transposes deconstructivist values found in their approach to fashion to potential sustainable design approaches.

Document Included (Typology)	Academic Articles, Book Chapters, Journal articles
Time Horizon	1979 - 2020
Keywords	Deconstruction Fashion, Sustainability, Philosophy

Table 4. Criteria for texts selection

4.1

Breaking the norms

Roland Barthes' "The Fashion System" introduced the idea of fashion as a system of signification, which became a dominant framework in the field of Fashion Studies. This perspective views fashion as a structured language with symbols and meanings. Nowadays, we can't think of fashion as a homogeneous system, since it has become much more complex. Due to postmodern culture traditional notions of signification have changed, and symbols carry different meanings than traditional ones. (Mikerina, D., 2016)

Deconstruction accomplishes this by breaking down the rigid hierarchical system of classification and language and causing disorder and bringing a new form of order: we can say that philosophical, architectural, and fashionable deconstructivism are linked by the ideology of resistance and the ability to reject conventional norms and standards. [see Chapter 1.1]

In fashion specifically deconstruction has a dual meaning, one referring to the structural characteristics and the other one to the intellectual process behind creating fashion. (Loscialpo, F., 2011)

Deconstructing fashion relates to typical stereotypes about fashion garments, embracing elements of asymmetry, mixture of styles, and

deliberate unfinished looks to create garments that defy conventional expectations. (Skivko, M., 2020) The main stylistic characteristics that are reflected in deconstructivist clothing are elements such as exposed seams, raw edges, or asymmetric details, that, unlike typical haute couture clothing, don't aim for polished and flawless finishes, but make garments appear incomplete or in progress. (Gill, A., 1998) Another visual peculiarity of deconstructivist fashion is its genderless or anonymous garments, which prioritize a monochromatic or neutral palette.

The apparent incompleteness of deconstructivist fashion often showcases the construction process of fashion itself, revealing the inner workings of the garment, celebrating its handmade quality and challenging the cultural notion of perfection. (Skivko, M., 2020) In addition it opens multiple interpretations of a garment, fosters engagement, encouraging wearers to participate in the creative process of fashion (Gill, A., 1998). Deconstructivist fashion often transcends traditional gender boundaries, offering garments that are not explicitly defined by masculine or feminine characteristics. By creating gender-neutral or anonymous clothing, designers challenge stereotypes and norms associated with gendered fashion, promoting inclusivity and diversity within the industry (Granata, F., 2013).

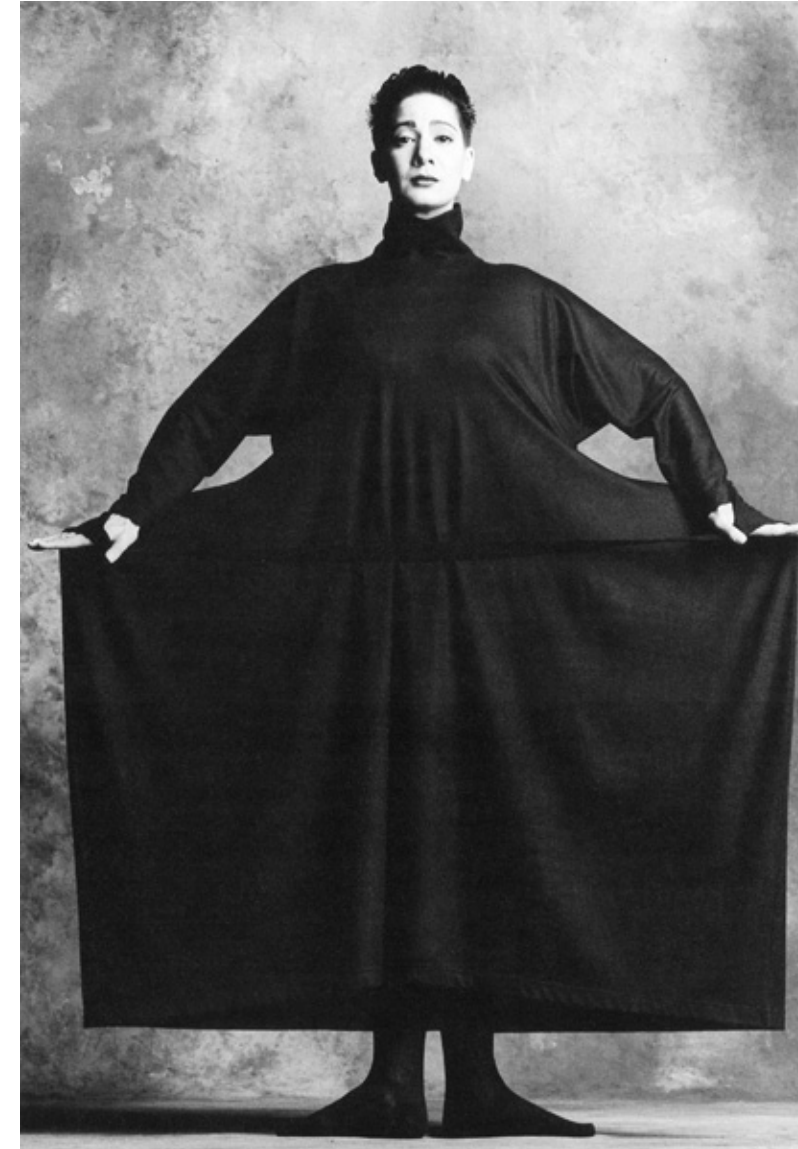


Fig. 29
"A piece of Cloth". Issey Miyake, 1976.
The clothes are made out of a single piece of cloth which entirely covers the body.
Photograph: Noriaki Yokosuka



Fig. 28
Issey Miyake "Permanente", 1986
Model: Ellen Van Schylenburch
(Contemporary Dancer)
Photograph by Snowdon, Camera Press London

"There are no boundaries for what can be fabric, for what clothes can be made from. Anything can be clothing."

Issey Miyake, 1988

4.2

Case studies:

pioneers of deconstruction

Deconstructivist fashion has some established values, as previously investigated, but it takes very different forms and directions. In this chapter, I will analyze the manifestations of deconstruction in fashion through the works of three designers—Vivienne Westwood, Rei Kawakubo, and Martin Margiela—each from distinct cultural backgrounds. These designers successfully deconstructed the notion of fashion, which, during their time, was still very traditional and normative regarding gender roles, class, and garment construction (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2020).

As I will further explain, Kawakubo's and Margiela's approaches are strongly aligned with architectural deconstructivism, as they defied structural rules of dress to alter notions of the fashion system (ibid). Kawakubo, founder of Comme des Garçons, is renowned for her avant-garde designs that challenge conventional aesthetics. Her work often features asymmetry, unconventional silhouettes, and an intentional disregard for traditional tailoring techniques. This approach questions and redefines the boundaries of fashion, making a profound statement about beauty and form. (de Perthuis, K., 2019)

Martin Margiela, another key figure, is known for his radical approach to deconstruction. His designs often involve the repurposing of existing garments, exposing seams, linings, and other typically hidden elements of clothing (Gill, A., 1998). Margiela's work deconstructs not only the physical garment

but also the fashion industry's norms of glamour and elegance, promoting sustainability through repurposing materials and a deeper appreciation for craftsmanship.

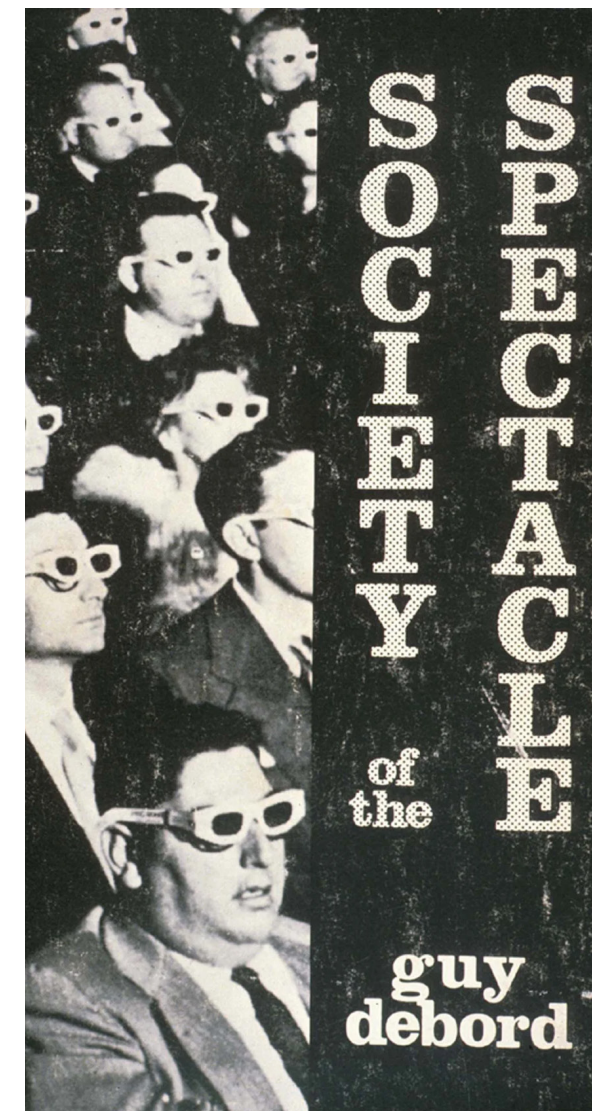
Vivienne Westwood, who preceded Kawakubo and Margiela by a few years, did not fully destabilize the structure of garments but significantly disrupted the language of fashion. By rebelling against social conventions, she paved the way for future designers. Westwood's punk-inspired aesthetics and political activism challenged societal norms and questioned the status quo, making her a pioneering force in fashion deconstruction (Polan, B., Tredre, R., 2020).

In examining these designers, it becomes evident how deconstructivist fashion can take diverse paths while sharing a common goal: challenging and redefining traditional norms. Through their unique approaches, Westwood, Kawakubo, and Margiela have each contributed to a more dynamic and reflective fashion system, aligning with the postmodern condition of questioning absolute truths and embracing complexity and diversity.

4.2.1

Vivienne Westwood and the Situationist approach

Vivienne Westwood can be considered one of the first designers, who radically disrupted the concept of fashion. Her way of creating clothing can be defined as "critical fashion", a way rebelling against the "torpid modern consciousness", modern conservatism and bigotry that was very prominent in the UK in the 1970's. (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2017) Her approach can be compared to that of the Situationists, an art movement inspired by Marxism that critiqued advanced capitalism and aimed to crack the surface of social consciousness, disturbing the lethargy created by the commodity. (Debord, G., 1967)



Westwood and her partner Malcolm McLaren, following this concept, introduced fashion in a politicized universe, by using direct images and graphics to protest against the government, right wing politics and bourgeoisie. Early t-shirts presented slogans such as "Anarchy in the UK" and "God Save The Queen" (depicting the queen with a safety pin through her nose), "Destroy" (depicting a swastika with an inverted image of Christ and a postage stamp depicting the Queen with a severed head). Her deconstructivist approach to fashion is very connected to the concept of "do-it-yourself", bricolage, as a way to reveal the process of production behind the products and subverting their original meaning. This "production of production" demystifies the commodity which is fashion, freeing it from its elitist allure: being fashionable became not associated with wealth anymore, by shattering pre-established notions of quality and status. (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2017)

Her repurposed and degraded clothes, such as T-shirts with provocative slogans, with bones and detritus sewn onto (Fig.32) served as vehicles for social activism. [ibid] This is also achieved by Westwood by juxtaposing typically contrasting signifying objects (e.g. "school girl" skirts with bondage elements) to overturn social orders and produce new meanings. By violating these pre-existing hierarchies of signifiers, fashion acts as a medium of "transgressive resistance" to the status quo. (Hebdige, D., 1979)

Fig 30
In "Society of the Spectacle" (1967), the foundational text for the Situationist International movement, Guy Debord explains how capitalism has numbed people, disconnecting them from the realities of mass production and becoming mere spectators of what surrounds them.



Fig 31 "Two Naked Cowboys" T-Shirt, 1974
This shirt got Westwood and McLaren arrested for "exposing to public view an indecent exhibition" (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2017, p.12) Features artwork from Jim French's 1969 illustration series "Longhorns". Photograph: Dennis Morris

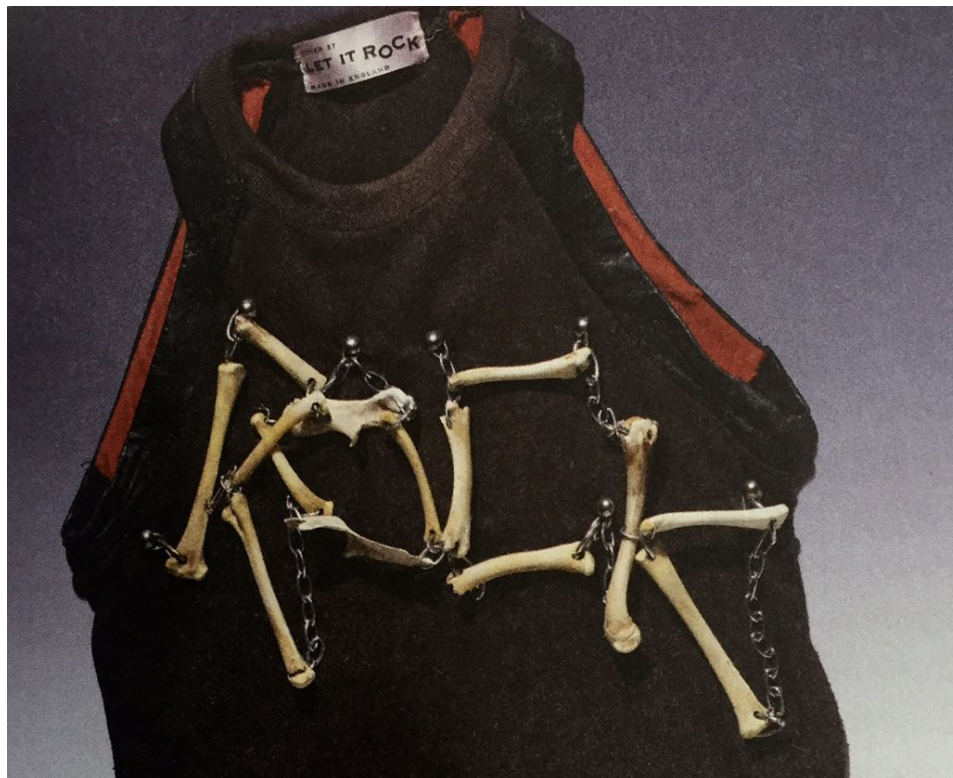


Fig 32 "Chicken bone Shirt", from "LET IT ROCK" Era, 1971
Repurposed t-shirt with application of chicken bones.

The juxtaposition of elements of the past and present is also another way of deconstructing stereotypes. We can clearly see this ideal come to life in her A/W 1989 collection "Voyage to Cythera" (Fig. 32), where one of fashion's most oppressive garment and symbol, the corset, was turned into a feminist symbol of liberation and a parody of the upper class. (Wilson E., 1992). The mixing of historic symbols with transgressive and contemporary elements is a recurrent theme in Westwood's collections and is a perfect example of her deconstructivist approach to fashion: by parodizing and polluting traditional costumes, she desecrates conventional social and signifying orders (ibid).



Fig. 33 Fall/Winter 1989: "Voyage to Cythera"

"Knowledge of the past lends perspective to the present and insight into the future...All my ideas come from studying the ideas of the past. I design clothes in the hope of breaking convention."

Westwood in an episode of "Painted Ladies", 1996

4.2.2

Rei Kawakubo and the Japanese Avant-Garde

In the early 1980's Paris' fashion scene started to be revolutionized by a group of designers commonly called the "Japanese Avant-Garde" (Kawamura, Y., 2004): Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake are considered the parents of deconstruction in fashion as they brought a never seen before vision of fashion, which challenged Western norms of sexuality and creativity. [ibid] Even if it is wrong to identify these designers only with their Japanese heritage, we have to note that Japanese culture plays a part in their interpretation of the concept of perfection and beauty, which is not connected to status or a polished look. (English, B., 2011.)

Issey Miyake was the first designer who revolutionized fashion, by breaking stereotypes of design by deconstructing its limits, in both functional and aesthetic terms. He himself takes a postmodern stance on fashion by stating that he believes in "questioning" [ibid, p.10]. This led to incredible innovation in clothing, from the fabrication, where he discovered ways of minimizing waste, to the use, or the reuse. His most famous collection A Piece of Cloth (A-POC) shows these very ideals and marks a very innovative stance of the way of perceiving fashion and on textile technologies: the main principle of A-POC is to not cut into the woven cloth, but to respect the integrity of the material and to use its shape to dress the body. (Joo, S.K., Jeong, J., 2017)

For the sake of my thesis I will be focusing on the work of Rei Kawakubo, as her radical way of designing and expressing herself is more pertinent to deconstructivism.

To analyze the early works of Kawakubo, we also have to include Yohji Yamamoto, since they have very similar designs and concepts. Since their first fashion show in Paris, in 1981, where they presented together their collection, where models, dressed in black deconstructed clothes, were described as looking "cadaverous with either shaved heads or seemingly dirty unkempt hair", with pasty



Fig. 34 Fall/Winter 1982-83: Holes Collection
Purposely distressed and unfinished garments, "Holes" included Kawakubo's infamous hole- and dropped-stitch Sweater, created by deliberately configuring the knitting machines to produce this effect.

white faces that were "devoid of make-up, apart from a disturbing bruised blue on their lower lips" (Mendes, V., de la Haye, A., 1999, p. 234). The Parisian audience, which was still molded by an elitist industry founded on glamour, luxury and visual sumptuousness, was shocked. (Kawamura, Y., 2004) In fact the designers defied all the rules of haute couture, which had its origins in Paris, through clothing with no hems or finished edges, ill-fitting garments with exposed seams and padded pouches inserted inside dressed in the most unconventional places (see "Dress Meets Body - Body Meets Dress", Fig. 35, and "Inside Decoration", Fig. 37). [ibid] Kawakubo and Yamamoto started to deconstruct the image of the 1980s woman by challenging the glamorous image of the models that had dominated the catwalks for the last decade. The typically Western concept of structured and tailored garments, which emphasized the sexual nature of dress, was completely disrupted and replaced by a "sculptural interrogation of form, the nature and tactility of fabric and the interactive space between the body and the cloth." (English, B., 2011, p.44) In the same way menswear was equally disrupted, by deconstructing the image of the Western business suit, allied with commercial success and corporate image, rather than an emphasis on the individual. [ibid] We can say that through fashion Kawakubo dissolved gender binaries (Fig. 36) and beauty stereotypes, but her goal wasn't to shock the audience or rebel against the norms. Her vision and philosophy seems heavily influenced by deconstructivist thinking and a natural fascination with the unfinished, the monochromatic, the unusual: in all these "imperfections" resides beauty. (Kawamura, Y., 2004)



Fig. 35 'Body Meets Dress', dress of blue/black polyester and cotton, padded with tulle, Spring/Summer 1997
© Rei Kawakubo, Comme des Garçons.



Fig. 36 S/S1995: " **Transcending Gender**"

Kawakubo used tailoring to conceptually deconstruct gender, to reveal not just the bones of fashion, but also our bodies – stripped of its ideals, stigmas, conventions and rules.



Fig. 37 A/W 10-11 **Inside Decoration**

Kawakubo incorporated removable pillows into the linings of garments creating bulges and sculpturally (de)forming the body.

"I find beauty in the unfinished and the random . . . I want to see things differently to search for beauty. I want to find something nobody has ever found . . . it is meaningless to create something predictable."

Rei Kawakubo
in Hirakawa, T.
1990, p.24

4.2.3

Martin Margiela and Baudelaire's rag-picker

Martin Margiela graduated from the Antwerp Academy of Fine Arts in 1981, the same year as Kawakubo and Yamamoto presented their first show in Paris, two designers from whom he was heavily influenced. (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2020). From then on, Margiela applied his own interpretation of deconstruction to fashion, revolutionizing the notion of haute couture. The Belgian designer was particularly interested in revealing the inner structure of dress, by reinventing traditional rules of tailoring and silhouette. His early designs were characterized by mis-matched fabrics, cut and resewn old jackets, reversed and exposed seams. (Gill, A., 2007) This structural characteristic of Margielas garments weren't an end to itself, but a way of revealing the internal operations of fashion, demystifying the process of tailoring (e.g. 1997 S/S and A/W Collections, Fig.37) where "destruction becomes a process of analytical creation". (Martin and Koda, 1993, p. 94)

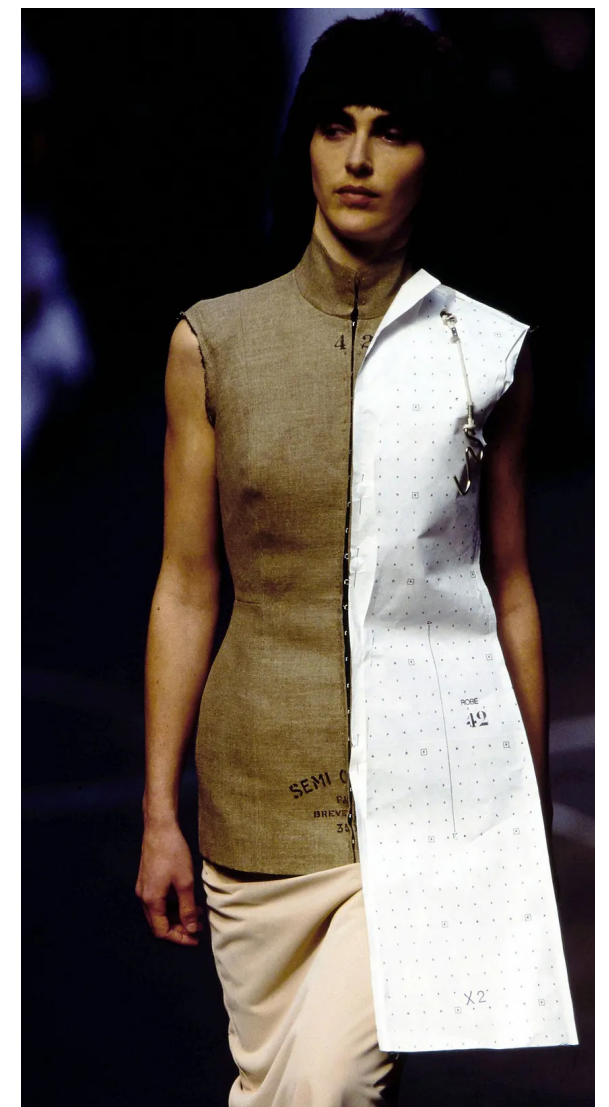
Another big peculiarity of his way of creating fashion was the recovery and reuse of "any material that comes to hand" (Interview with Stephen O'Shea, 1991 in ELLE Magazine), in the form of recuperating old clothing and give them a new life (e.g. Sock Sweater, Fig.38) but also the concept of "objet trouvé" in fashion, that is utilizing any kind of found object or pre-existing material to create garments (e.g. Waistcoat made of broken ceramic plates, Fig. 39; Vest made of advertising poster paper, Fig.40).



Fig. 38 Sweater made out of Army socks, 1991
Margiela released a step to step tutorial for this garment in "A Magazine N°1 Curated by Maison Martin Margiela".



Fig. 39 1997 S/S and A/W Collections: hollowed out stockman dress form made into a jacket, implemented a lesson on drapery on different parts of the upper body in transparent-black muslin. A/W continued the use of the stockman dummy but in half outfits, seemingly in unfinished manufacturing processes.



objet trouvé



Fig.40 1913 "Bicycle Wheel", Marcel Duchamp

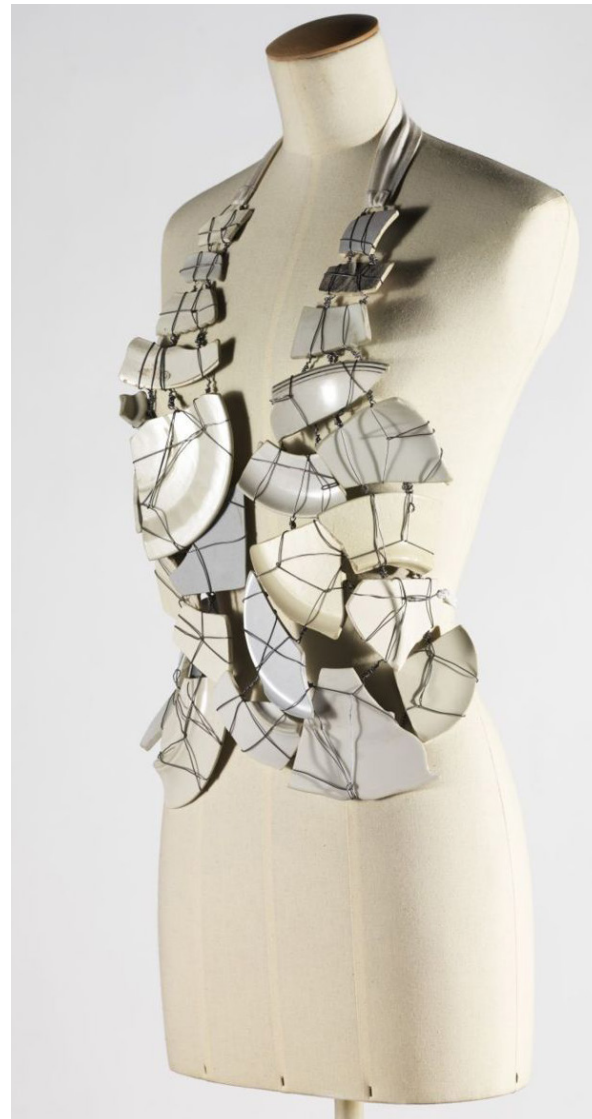


Fig. 41 1989 A/W Collection: waistcoat made from broken ceramic plates and metal wire

This tendency of sourcing and reworking old materials or garments was linked to the image of a nineteenth' century rag-picker (Evans, C. , 1998) , a figure that existed at the margins of society and scavenged discarded objects for necessity (Benjamin, W., 1997) In Charles Baudelaire's poem "Le Vin du Chiffonniers" (1988) the rag-picker is compared to a poet, or an artist who catalogs and collects "everything that the big city threw away, everything it lost, everything it despised, everything it crushed under foot.... He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum (stockpile) of waste. He sorts things out and makes a wise choice; he collects, like a miser guarding a treasure, the refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the Goddess of Industry" (Charles Baudelaire, quoted in Benjamin, 1997, p. 79)

This historical context reinforces the significance of Margiela's work in contemporary fashion, where he subverts traditional hierarchies by placing second-hand clothing at the pinnacle of fashion prestige. The fashion designer's process of repurposing and revitalizing these materials can be seen as an artistic endeavor that challenges conventional notions of value and prestige. (Evans, C. , 1998)



Fig.42 1990 S/S Collection
Sleeveless vest made out of advertising poster paper, lined with cotton

4.3 Cultural consequences and sustainable potential

Just as Derridean approaches to philosophy, literature and cultural theory influenced feminist and postmodern scholars, Westwood, Kawakubo and Margiela influenced several generations of designers and, more broadly, the perception of fashion. By rejecting notions of conspicuous consumption, glamour, perfection and quality they deconstructed the concept of normative fashion standards. There is a strong correlation between deconstructing pre-established patterns in fashion and moving towards a sustainable thinking: only by criticizing what already exists real change can be created. Particularly the deconstruction practiced by the previously analyzed designers creates three types of conflicts which lead to a more sustainable approach to fashion: conflict of function, conflict of form and conflict of ideology (Skivko, M., 2020)

Deconstruction blurs the boundaries between various pieces of clothing by destabilizing pre-established signifying orders, clothing is no longer assigned to a specific function (e.g. a suit for work, a gown for a gala). The tendency of valuing a monochromatic palette (English, B., 2018), using non-traditional fabrics and materials, deconstructing vintage clothes and juxtaposing contrasting elements (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2017), introduces innovative aesthetic and functional concepts that allow one to escape from the rigid scheme imposed by fashion and thus promotes a versatile sustainable approach towards fashion. The employment of non conventional materials and asymmetric shapes, uneven hems, and extra clothing parts, redefines the standardized form of clothes that traditionally have to vary

seasonally. (Cline, E., 2012) In addition, the mixing of styles, proportions and fabrics in a single garment establishes a new relationship between clothing and the body, deconstructing the traditional hierarchy where the body is primary and the clothes are secondary. Deconstructivist designs distort sexuality and gender norms shifting the focus to the relationship between the body and the clothes. (de Perthuis, K., 2019) This visual transformation emphasizes the universality of fashion garments and blurs the boundaries between established fashion norms offering the opportunity of inclusivity and freedom of expression. Consequently, the ideology of fashion is also reevaluated, first of all by a non-commercial (e.g. Westwood's slogan "BUY LESS, CHOOSE WELL, MAKE IT LAST") and anti-status approach: the idea of anonymity, especially in Margiela's designs, disrupts the association of clothing to specific brands and de-commercializes fashion. (Gill, A., 1998) Destroying notions of glamour and perfection, which is a recurrent theme in deconstructivist fashion [see Case Studies] dissociates garments from wealth signaling, which leads to a more conscious consumption.

The conflicts created by deconstructing traditional paradigms of fashion through different values and techniques are an expedient for implementing sustainable thinking in design and creating potential change in the fashion system. The next chapter highlights how these values, each one derived from one of the previous case studies, leads to innovative design and intellectual approaches which can shift us to a truly sustainable fashion system.



Fig. 43
1997 Martin Margiela Exhibition
(9/4/1615)
Garments were treated with different
strains of bacteria, yeast and mould

05 DECONSTRUCTIVIST VALUES IN SUSTAINABLE THINKING

Sustainable thinking is fundamental to have a right involvement in the fashion system and its ethical and environmental performance (Gwilt, A., 2020). The previously analyzed case studies represent three different visions of deconstruction in fashion, from which I have deduced three values that can be applied when approaching the fashion system, both from a design and consumer perspective: Vivienne Westwood's do-it-yourself approach through the process of "bricolage" which permits to have a strongly individualized attitude to fashion and de-commodify clothing, deconstructing the concept of high and low class. Rei Kawakubo's pondering but very innovative design which is to reconnectable "wabi-sabi" philosophy of valuing and even accentuating imperfection to deconstructs social and aesthetic notions. Lastly, Margiela's "rag-picking", that through the activity of "récupération", gives value to forgotten materials and disassembles old garments to deconstruct the idea of newness versus obsolescence.

Thus, deconstruction is inherently very coherent with the concept of sustainable thinking, as it encourages the extreme questioning of what

surrounds us and what is told to us (Liguori, A., 2020): with fashion it is very important to transpose this criticality in an industry, which too often acts for the wrong reasons and only has profit in mind (see Chapter 3). In this chapter I applied the three deconstructivist values, extrapolated from the case studies to the concept of sustainable thinking and design approaches. Three main approaches were individuated, in which the influence of deconstructivist values, found in the previous research, was clear: Active Design, as a way to communicate and influence society by provoking thought about social matters, as seen in Vivienne Westwood's active resistance and "bricolage" practice (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2017), Imperfect Design, a reference to Japanese "wabi-sabi" philosophy, prominent in the works of Rei Kawakubo which destabilize notions of perfection and add emotional value to fashion (English, B., 2011), and, on a more practical level, Reassembled Design, that through Margiela's "récupération" (Gill, A., 1998), promotes the reuse and recycling of materials and the disassembling and reassembling of products in a circular economy model.

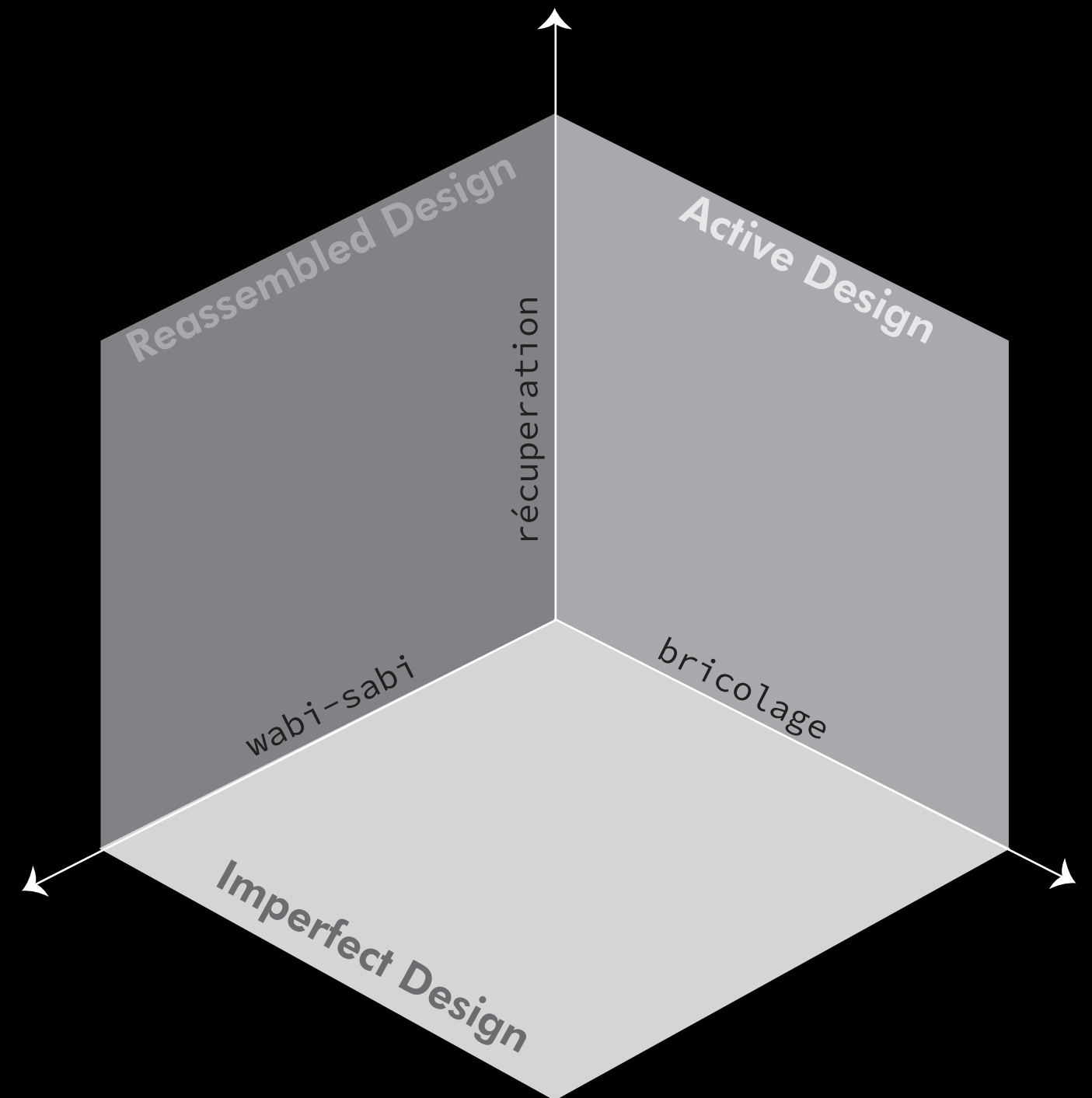


Fig 44. This multidimensional diagram highlights how three deconstructivist approaches lead to sustainable design practices, which will be explicated in the following chapters.

5.1 Active Design

Critical design, a term introduced by Anthony Dunne in his book, *Hertzian Tales* (1999), refers to an attitude toward design rather than a movement or method (MoMa). Typically, its goal is to challenge the audience's preconceptions, inducing new ways of thinking about an object, its use, and the surrounding culture.

Deconstruction in fashion, especially Westwood's approach (see Chapter 4.2.1), is reconnectable to the ideals of critical design as it uses clothing to send a message and raise social awareness. This way of designing critically is fundamental when talking about sustainability since it focuses creating thought provoking garments, engaging the public and using the image of the designer as a catalyst for social change (David Burns, L., 2019). Giving it's highly participatory and cooperative nature I will define this approach as **Active Design**.

Especially in fashion an active approach to design is achievable through the act of "bricolage": Claude Levi-Strauss first introduced the concept of bricolage in his book *"La Pensée Sauvage"* (The Savage Mind) in 1962, to describe a way of thinking that involves the creative reconstruction of cultural artifacts and idea, taking various elements from different sources - spiritual, social, historical, technical- and reorganizing them to form new structures. (Levi-Strauss, C., 1962)

Through this practice, as Vivienne Westwood recalls, it is possible to "*transcend definitions of class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation*" as the strive is to "*construct new personae for future cultures that draw upon idealized visions of the past inspired by portraiture and film*". (Arnold, R., 2009, p.729)



Fig.45 Margaret Thatcher greets Katharine Hamnett, wearing a T-shirt with a nuclear missile protest message, at 10 Downing Street, where she hosted a reception for London fashion week designers in 1984.



Fig. 46 Barbara Kruger, 1987
By using words and found images, Kruger subverts the common ad with social critique through postmodern conceptual art.

Fig. 47 "Hyperreal " by Marta Twarowska (Master Fashion Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, 2017), used as a campaign image for the symposium Responsible Fashion Series: Can Fashion Save the World? Hosted by Antwerp University and taking place between October 20th and 22nd 2021 in context of the Responsible Fashion Series, the dean held a plea for an engaged fashion practice, and the role of education. Photo © Jan&Jorre



Bricolage serves as a tool to question and critique mainstream design practices and societal norms and allows designers to subvert traditional forms and functions, highlighting issues such as consumerism, sustainability, and social inequality.

In addition to having an intellectual impact on the consumers, bricolage inherently promotes sustainability by reusing and repurposing existing materials. (Rossi, C., 2015)

Active design permits to transcend the merely aesthetic or functional form of fashion and promotes political and sociological change through the production and consumption of clothing.

We can define this approach as a direction towards design activism, a concept which puts the designer in a position to challenge the current practices with design thinking to improve the environment and society. (Fuad-Luke, A., 2009)

As Active design can take many forms, in fashion there are different solutions to reach it, the primary one is engaging with the consumers and making them participate in the creation of a product, mentally and physically, to avoid the commodity fetishism and alienation created by mass produced fashion. (Hirscher A., Niinimäki K., 2012) This notion is reconnectable to Westwood's store "A Worlds End" which she defined as a design lab rather than a shop (Geczy, A., Karaminas, V., 2017): the image of the workshop, which is very close to the act of bricolage, is a perfect environment to design actively and abolish the barriers between product and consumer and let the latter become a vital influential factor in the products meaning and not just a recipient.

In conclusion, Active Design means that the consumer is no longer a spectator, victim of a system he doesn't understand, but becomes active in the process of production and signification of clothing.



Fig. 48 In 2012, Vivienne Westwood launched Climate Revolution (her campaign to address climate change issues) at the 2012 London Paralympics closing ceremony. During the event she stated that "Climate revolution is the ultimate revolution; if we don't win that, there won't be many of us left".

5.2 Imperfect Design

The ancient philosophy of **wabi-sabi** (侘び寂び), valuing what is generally perceived as “imperfect”, plays a big role in the deconstructivist effect the Japanese Avant-Garde had on the Western conception of fashion. (English, B., 2011)

Wabi refers to “subdued, austere beauty,” while Sabi means “rustic patina” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy): these concepts are deeply linked to Buddhism, where the natural state of our world is a boundless universe of nothingness (or absolute relativity), in which nothing is permanent nor absolute, including our existence (interactiongreen.com). In this chapter, I will not dive into the history of this traditional concept, but I will focus on its implications for design.

Deconstructing notions of perfection and sartorial harmony is the main work of Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, from which we can deduce the approach of **Imperfect Design**. Valuing imperfection, especially in our fast-paced hyper consumerist society, is important for sustainability in design and fashion as it can increase product longevity (Salvia G., et al, 2010). Nowadays, quickly changing trends and hypes which expand immediately, through social media, reinforce the

habit of discarding products faster and faster and changing fashion and aesthetics.

In fact, Imperfect Design aims to reinforce the psychological attachment to an object, in this case to a garment, to promote their “eternal use” (ibid).

Kawakubo’s “Bump” collection, from S/S 1997, where the female figure is distorted through the clothes, embodies the concept of designing imperfections to create a connection between consumer and product: fashion surpasses the function of sexuality and status and becomes a “psychological portrait of one’s sense of being within today’s society” (English, B., 2011, p.74).

The trendless approach of this design practice, which transcends the superficial values of conventional beauty standards, brings to a more conscious consumption, as fashion is not regarded as a disposable obsolete aesthetic. Imperfect Design does not only cause the abstraction of a garment but is also connected to the image of natural decay, reflected in the material appearance of the products, which present with “flaws” that escape the uniformity of mass-produced textiles (English,B., 2011).



Fig. 49 Memory chair by Tokujin Yoshioka for Moroso
This chair is covered in a dome of fabric made of recycled aluminum, which retains the shape it's squashed into. According to use it transforms and memorizes the shape, a reminder of the beauty of used objects and their ever-changing nature.



Fig. 50 Iris Van Herpen’s Spring 2017 couture collection “Between the Lines” is an exploration of the imperfection of systems and structure in both the physical and digital worlds.

Photography by Warren du Preez and Nick Thornton Jones

Such imperfections might include uneven dyes, frayed edges, or asymmetrical cuts. These characteristics not only make each garment unique but also tell a story of its journey and use, enhancing its sentimental value. These “imperfect” garments thus become anti-commercial and permit to exit the spiral of buying- using- throwing away (ibid). Another sustainable peculiarity of designing imperfections is the preference of natural materials, such as wool, linen and cotton, that are durable and less polluting, thus having less environmental impact (Fang, G. et al., 2023).

The natural characteristics of these type of materials emphasize the time passed since the construction of a garment, which, following wabi-sabi notions, is something we should aspire to through design. Sustainable design does not have to follow a particular aesthetic, but it must embrace the aging of products, which accumulate meaning over time and “contrast to the current uniformity in product appearance that relies so heavily on ‘newness’” (Walker, S., 2009 ,p.6).



Fig.51 Tomomi Kamoshita
The artist incorporates a modernized kintsugi technique, utilizing brass powder mixed with urushi, a biobased lacquer; rather than simply repairing a pre-existing cup or dish, she incorporates foreign materials such as sea glass to produce a new work of art.

The concept of design of imperfection is embodied by the traditional art of Kintsugi, a philosophy that celebrates use, which can be of inspiration for future design approaches.

Kintsugi translates as “golden joinery”, from the Japanese kin (gold) and tsugi (joint) and was developed in Japan during the 15th century. The practice consists in repairing a broken object by mending its cracks with gold, accentuating them instead of hiding them.

(Céline Santini, "Kintsugi: Finding Strength in Imperfection", 2018)

Fig. 52 Liza Lou, "Pray", 2010-2011
White and 24 Karat Gold-Plated Glass Beads, Cotton
Kintsugi art transposed to textile by accentuating cracks with golden beads.

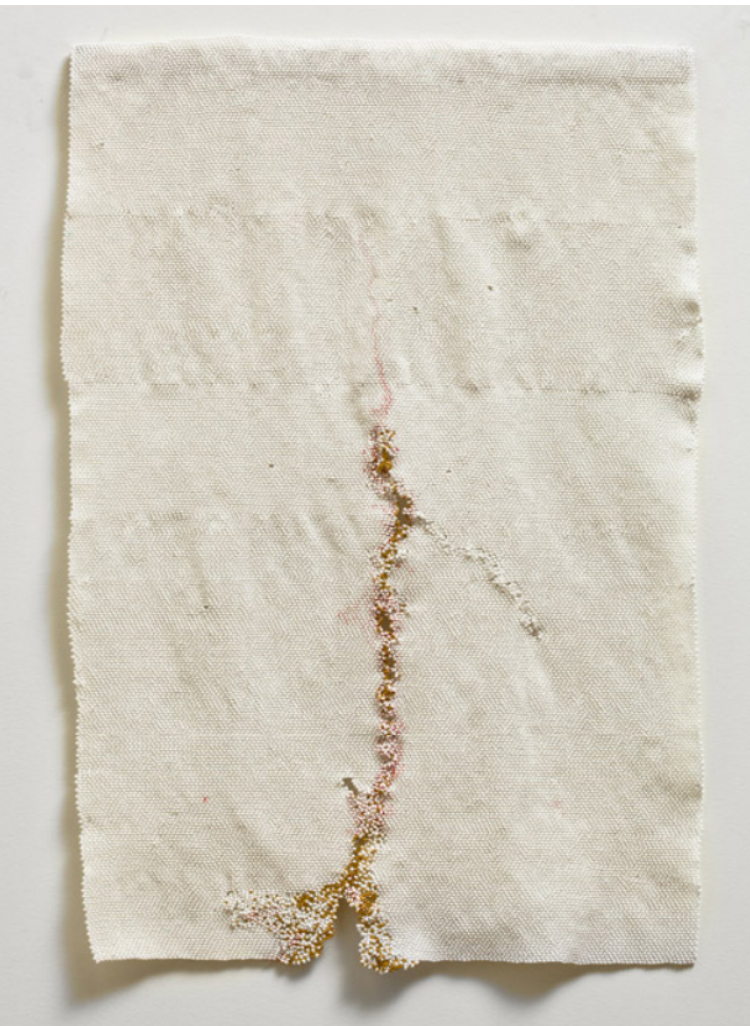


Fig. 53 "Kintsugi" Collection by Amy Nguyen: This collection touches upon the beauty that may be found in cracks, patches, and that which is broken.

Heavy Wool Wrap Coat,
Hand-dyed mottled wool
and linen, hand-cut,
deconstructed, stitched

5.3

Reassembled Design

Circular design, within the principles of sustainability and circular economy, refers to replacing the “end of life” of products with alternative solutions. This type of design implements a rethinking of the whole design process, where products are destined to be recycled, reused or recovered and, vice versa, created from already existing materials (Kessler L. et al., 2021).

In 2017 the Center for Circular Design established that the use of recycling is “design practice to innovate and inform the development of the circular economy” (UAL, 2019, Centre for Circular Design). This concept is structurally and intellectually intrinsic to deconstructivist fashion, particularly in the case of Martin Margiela, which

I declinate in the **Reassembled Design** approach: almost naturally his garments consist of found objects, old clothes which were torn and re-sewn together, and products destined to one use modified to generate a different purpose.

This practice is particularly relevant to sustainability, given today’s excess of leftover and discarded materials, with an estimated 7 million tons of textile waste just in Europe, where 82% is post-consumer waste, and 1.7 million tons of donated clothing exported to Africa and Asia to end up in landfills (European Environment Agency). By reprising Margiela’s role as the “*Golden Dustman*” (Evans, C., 1998) these discarded objects can become valuable, raw materials and reassembled to create new garments.



Fig. 55 Detail of cloth made thorough "boro" technique

Boro (form Japanese ぼろきれ) means rag, tattered fabric. Boro is a centuries-old textile practice from to northern Japan, made mostly by women for the purposes of survival and functionality, and uses up the limited resources available to them.

Garments are pieced together from scraps of used fabric or reassembled old clothes.



Fig.54 Helen Kirkum
Reassembled sneakers, 2023

When talking about Reassembled Design, we must note the material quality of fashion: the concept of materialization of fashion shows how ideas, values, and identities are given concrete form through the creation, wearing, and alteration of clothing. Each stage—from the choice of materials to the methods of garment construction—contributes to the materialization of fashion. This perspective highlights that fashion is not just a fleeting aesthetic but a tangible manifestation of cultural and social practices. (Woodward, S., Fisher, T., 2014) As proposed by theorists like Miller and Keane the material world shapes and is shaped by human experience, making our garments not just a symbol but an active participant in the formation and expression of identity. (Miller, D., Keane, W., 2005)

By valuing these material characteristics of fashion, Reassembled Design discerns garments, or objects, from their symbolic meaning, making it easier to see their new potential and to practice a process of reassembling.

This design approach helps circularity since it brings to the revaluation of pre-established notions of a products life cycle: traditionally, we assume that, once a garment reaches its end of life, it should be disposed of as it's not useful anymore. By applying deconstructionist thinking on the binary opposites of old and new, this process can be changed: the two concepts, after being deconstructed, can be unified, creating a circular system free of limitations.



Fig. 54 Humberto and Fernando Campana, Favela Chair, 1991, armchair created from recycled pieces of wood. Made by Edra since 2003.

“What is a material and what are the things we design? The shifting categories of the things that become ‘material’...is of key interest. Fashion design no longer occupies a singular category where a linear methodology is enough to account for the current conditions of practice.”

(Everything and Everybody as Material: Beyond Fashion Design Methods, 2017)



Fig. 56 Maison Margiela, 2001 artisanal collection

Vest made from assembled leather gloves

5.4 IMAGINING AN ANTI-FASHION SYSTEM

The proposed model and the previously analyzed approaches signify a transformative shift in both thinking and practice within the fashion industry, affecting designers and consumers alike. Yet, the question remains: can we truly change the fashion system? Changing the fashion system involves challenging deeply ingrained practices and norms that prioritize rapid consumption, profit maximization, and often disregard environmental and social impacts. It requires addressing systemic issues such as exploitative labor practices, overproduction, and the promotion of unsustainable trends.

Progress towards change is evident in the growing awareness and adoption of sustainable practices by both emerging and established designers. Many are integrating eco-friendly materials, advocating for ethical production methods, and promoting longevity and durability in their designs. Consumers, too, are increasingly mindful of their purchasing decisions, seeking out brands that align with their values of sustainability and ethical responsibility.

However, significant barriers persist. The fashion industry is vast, complex, and deeply interconnected with global economies and cultural practices. Economic incentives often prioritize volume and turnover, making sustainable practices less economically viable in the short term. Moreover, consumer behavior, influenced by advertising, social media, and societal norms, continues to drive demand for new, inexpensive clothing.

In 2014 trend forecaster Li Edelkoort has published her Anti Fashion manifesto, outlining ten reasons the

fashion system is “obsolete” and why she believes the fashion industry “is going to implode” (Edelkoort, L., 2014).

Among these reasons she addresses that the first problem is education, which aims to form “catwalk designers” and “divas” (Edelkoort, L., 2014, p.1) ready to enter in the greedy luxury market resulting in being oblivious of the conceptual side of fashion. Other issues regard manufacturing, which is based on the exploitation of low-income countries, reinforcing the fact that clothing is disposable and destroying the culture of fashion. In addition, there is a problem with marketing, advertising and retailing which focus on selling the most products and feeding illusions to the public with superficial messages. In conclusion, Edelkoort’s manifesto is a call for action for the fashion systems to rethink itself and for consumers to engage in more sustainable practices and to contrast the big swindle fashion has become.

Nearly a decade later, the fashion industry continues to grapple with persistent challenges: the paradoxical push towards sustainability contrasts sharply with rampant overconsumption and overproduction of clothing. While there is a growing shift in mindset among some, the industry remains entrenched in normative fashion standards and perpetuates social status symbolism, hindering efforts towards equality and sustainability. Deconstruction exposes the inner mechanisms of the fashion system and its clothing and can escape the imperatives set by trends, which are currently dictating mainstream fashion. Anti-fashion means being able to defy such rules, deconstructing the system in which it operates and possibly creating a new one.

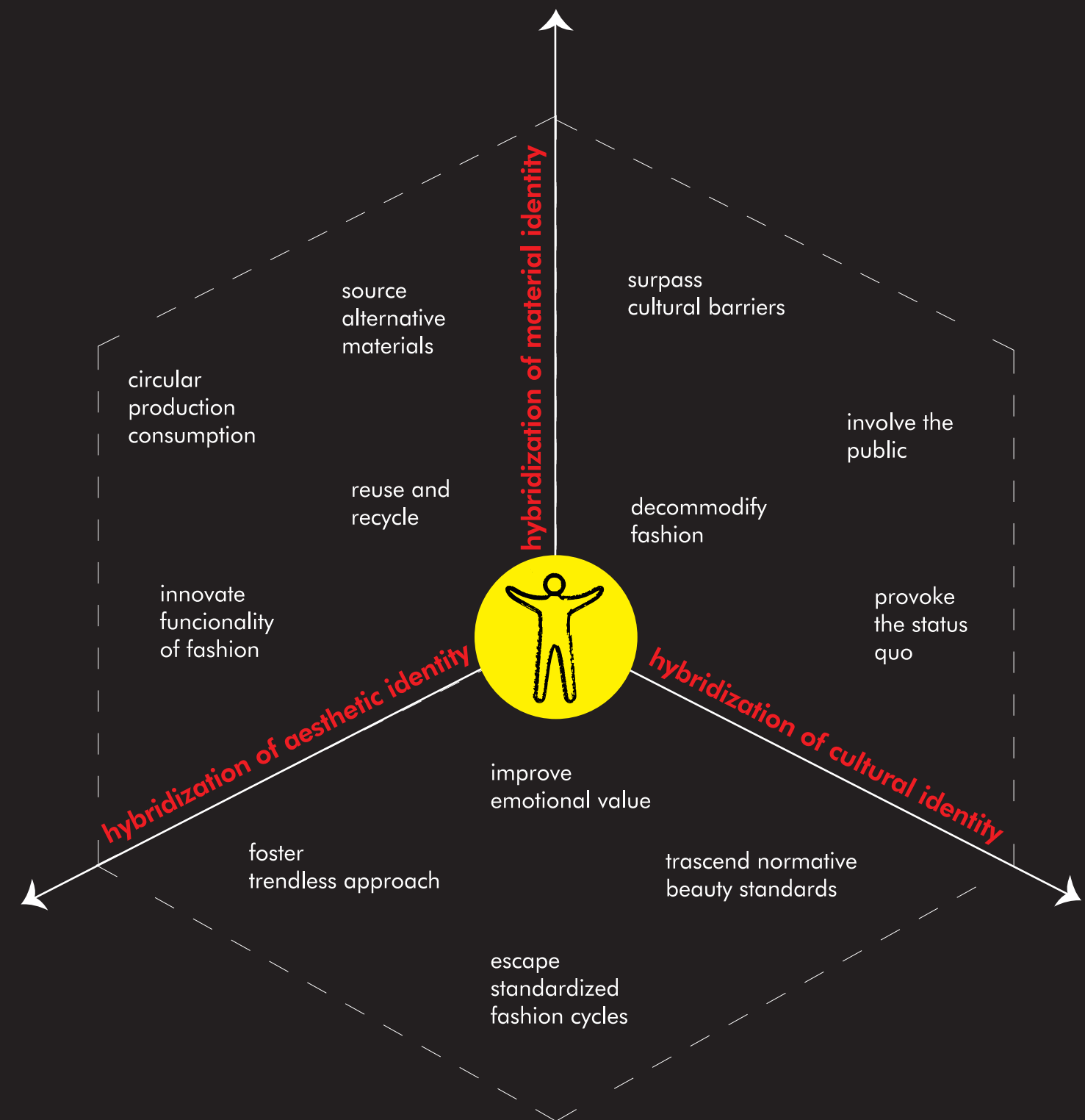


Fig. 58 This diagram represents the proposed critical model: putting the designer at the center, we see how his mindset changes and, for every dimension, how it is connected to sustainability

My proposal advocates for integrating a deconstructive thinking to catalyze change in designer perspectives. By adopting deconstructionist principles, designers can challenge traditional norms, innovate sustainable practices, and redefine the role of fashion. This approach encourages a critical examination of existing systems, promoting creativity that goes beyond aesthetic trends to prioritize ethical production, inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. Embracing deconstruction offers a pathway to dismantle outdated paradigms and steer the fashion industry towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

Since clothing is a symbol for the values, political circumstances and aesthetics of society (Evans, C., 2003) it plays a very important role in the evolution of civilization. In utopian studies various speculations

emerged on the future of fashion, which followed the notion of anti-fashion: in the ideal society outlined in “Utopia” by Thomas More (1516), people wear practical clothes that are practical and are suitable for any season. People are “happy with a single piece of clothing every two years” (More, T., 1965, p. 79) and do not possess more than what is strictly necessary. This interpretation of “anti-fashion” is very visionary for the 16th century and an utopian solution for social inequality and environmental issues, but in our current landscape it is simplistic and one-dimensional and doesn’t acknowledge the role of fashion as an artistic and social medium. (Wilson, E., 1985)

In an ideal system, clothing should transcend passing trends and fads to embody individual creativity, symbolize freedom, and foster criticality. This

perspective offers a counterbalance to the fashion industry’s inherent disposability and its negative societal impacts. While design alone cannot achieve this transformation, it serves as the crucial initial step in revolutionizing the concept of fashion. Building upon the design principles we’ve explored, there exists potential to shift towards a more sustainable fashion paradigm, both in material practices and conceptual frameworks.

However, sustainable fashion often challenges the economic and elitist interests embedded within the current fashion system. Achieving sustainability requires systematic changes across production, consumption, and cultural norms. This necessitates a deconstructive approach to fashion—a continuous self-critical approach that aims to dismantle traditional

norms and redefine the role of fashion in society. Such an approach strives to move beyond mere aesthetic trends towards a deeper engagement with ethical production, longevity of garments, and inclusivity.

Ultimately, advocating for an anti-fashion stance within a deconstructive framework aims to disrupt the cyclical nature of consumerism and encourage a more mindful relationship with clothing. It seeks to empower individuals to express themselves authentically through their attire while minimizing environmental impact and social inequalities. Embracing this paradigm shift requires collaboration among designers, consumers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to redefine fashion as a force for positive change rather than perpetuating unsustainable practices.

Fig. 59 Vanessa Beecroft, VB45. 2001.
Performance at Vienna Kunsthalle.



06 CONCLUSION

This thesis represents a deconstructive investigation of our current Fashion System. Starting from the philosophical notion of deconstruction, which has served as the basis of my analysis and as a multidimensional research tool, I explored how Derrida’s approach to critical thinking unravels established structures, binaries, and assumptions within texts and, more broadly, systems of thought. This framework is applied to research the opposing paradigms of our current fashion system, which I identify as disposable fashion and sustainable fashion. Through a sociological analysis, I discover that, in our current productive system, both are intrinsic to consumerism, fueled by competition between social classes and the desire for status signaling. Various literature reviews on the matter and survey findings retrieved from various consulting agencies (BCG, McKinsey) prove that to this day sustainability in fashion is used as a marketing strategy to in fact boost economic growth for the fashion system and continue to exploit workers, which is inherently unsustainable. From this research emerged that fundamentally luxury and cheap fashion brands are all destined for obsolescence due to the ever-changing trend cycles dictating consumption and production. Sustainable fashion, despite its green promises, is also caught in these cycles, becoming commodified to boost sales rather than genuinely addressing environmental and social concerns.

With this context, the thesis transitions to its core theme: the declination of deconstruction in fashion. I explore how this “movement” can disconnect clothing from its traditional system of signification through specific aesthetic characteristics and techniques. To codify these characteristics I selected three designers, known for being pioneers of this movement: Vivienne Westwood, Rei Kawakubo, and Martin Margiela were able to transpose the critical approach of deconstruction to fashion with the result of revolutionizing traditional garment structures but also social conventions of class, gender, status and “glamour”. Their works are examined to understand how each designer’s approach deconstructs traditional fashion norms and narratives. I identify how deconstruction leads

to different conflicts in fashion (form, function, and ideology) which challenge the status quo and thus represent the starting point of a sustainable approach to fashion. Westwood’s punk ideology disrupts social conventions through “bricolage”, Kawakubo’s Japanese avant-garde perspective challenges Western fashion norms through a “wabi-sabi” Weltanschauung, Margiela’s techniques reveal the inner structure of garments and repurpose materials creatively through “récupération”.

In the last chapter, these values are critically analyzed and declined in three design approaches that aim to shape our fashion system toward true sustainability. These approaches refer to design practice but also to conceptual meanings: Westwood’s do-it-yourself approach, which creatively reconstructs cultural artifacts encourages individualized and anti-commodified fashion, using garments to challenge social norms and consumerism, promoting critical thinking and activism in both design and consumption. Kawakubo’s work embodies the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, valuing imperfection and transience, which overcomes traditional beauty standards and promotes emotional attachment to garments, encouraging longevity, and conscious consumption and challenging the fast-paced, trend-driven nature of modern fashion. Margiela’s use of recycled materials and repurposed garments focuses on reusing and reassembling existing materials, advocating for a system where fashion items are constantly repurposed, countering the wasteful linear end-of-life cycle typical in the industry.

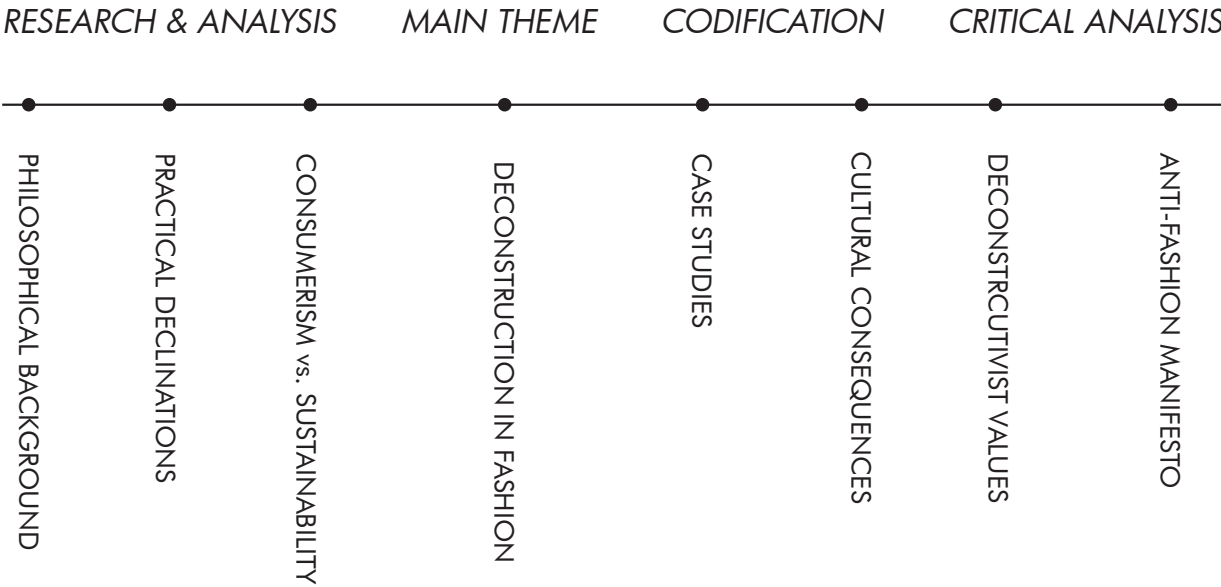
The proposed model for reimagining the fashion industry reflects on the potential of integrating deconstructivist and sustainable approaches. Central to this analysis is Li Edelkoort’s “Anti-Fashion” manifesto, a critique of the industry’s rampant overconsumption and superficiality. Edelkoort’s perspective challenges designers and consumers alike to rethink the prevailing norms of fashion consumption, advocating instead for a more mindful and deliberate approach to clothing production and consumption.

In parallel, insights from utopian studies provide speculative inspiration for envisioning a future fashion landscape that transcends current paradigms. These studies encourage imagining possibilities beyond the constraints of mainstream consumerism, offering a framework for systemic change within the fashion industry. The synthesis of these perspectives culminates in a proposed anti-fashion approach, characterized by its self-critical nature and resistance to the pressures of fast fashion and mass consumption. This approach seeks to redefine the purpose of fashion, moving away from ephemeral trends towards enduring values of creativity, individuality, and sustainability. The envisioned anti-fashion model aims to inspire designers to make more critical and responsible decisions in their creative processes, practically and intellectually. Fostering a holistic view of fashion

that considers its broader impact on society and the environment, this model prioritizes longevity and alternative production practices.

By encouraging critical reflection and promoting responsible consumption patterns, the anti-fashion movement seeks to align the fashion industry with principles of sustainability and social awareness. This paradigm shift challenges entrenched norms and invites stakeholders to reimagine fashion as a catalyst for positive change in the global community, moving toward a self-critical paradigm.

Ultimately, the goal is not only to mitigate the negative consequences of current fashion practices but also to foster a systemic change and pave the way for a more sustainable future.



ANNEX

Chapter 1.
Full texts final selection

Document Included (Typology)	Book Chapters, Interview Transcripts, Academic Articles
Time Horizon	1967 - 2020
Keywords	Deconstruction, Philosophy, Architecture, Fashion, Postmodernity

Title	Type	Source	Year	Philosophy	Deconstruction	Fashion
Of Grammatology	Book Chapter	Internet Archive	1976	☒	☒	☐
Letter to a Japanese Friend	Academic paper	Academia	1983	☐	☒	☐
Postmodernism and the Deconstruction of Modernism	Journal Article	Jstor	1988	☒	☒	☐
Deconstruction in a Nutshell	Book Chapter	Google Scholar	1997	☒	☒	☐
Feminism and Deconstruction	Journal Article	Jstor	1988	☐	☒	☒
On Deconstruction Theory and Criticism after Structuralism	Book Chapter	Google Scholar	1982	☒	☒	☐
Deconstructivist architecture	Book Chapters	MoMa website	1988	☐	☒	☐
Deconstructivist architecture challenges the very values of harmony, unity and stability	Journal article	Dezeen	2020	☐	☒	☐
Deconstruction Fashion	Journal article	Google Scholar	2013	☒	☒	☒
Sartorial Deconstruction: The Nature of Conceptualism in Postmodernist Japanese Fashion Design	Journal article	Griffith University	2011	☐	☒	☒
Deconstruction in Fashion as a Path Toward New Beauty Standards: The Maison Margiela Case	Academic article	Google Scholar	2020	☐	☒	☒

Chapter 2.
Full texts final selection

Document Included (Typology)	Academic Articles, Book Chapters, Scientific Articles
Time Horizon	1899 - 2023
Keywords	Consumerism, Fashion, Industrialization, Mass Society

Title	Type	Source	Year	Consumerism	Fashion	Capitalism
The Sociology of Consumption	Book	Politecnico Library	1997	☒	☒	☒
The Theory of the Leisure Class	Book Chapter	Internet Archive	1899	☒	☒	☐
Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods	Journal Article	JStor	1988	☒	☐	☐
Fashion	Journal Aricle	Jstor	1957	☒	☒	☐
Colonialism and the Rise of Capitalism	Journal Article	Jstor	1989	☒	☐	☒
The evolution of conspicuous consumption	Scientific paper	Emerald Insights	2012	☒	☐	☒
Addictive Consumption: Capitalism, Modernity and Excess	Book Chapter	Google Scholar	2018	☒	☒	☒
Trickle-Down Preferences: Preferential Conformity to High Status Peers in Fashion Choices	Scientific Article	Google Scholar	2016	☒	☒	☐
Fast fashioning the supply chain	Scientific article	Google Scholar	2006	☐	☒	☐
When luxury democratizes: Exploring the effects of luxury democratization, hedonic value and instrumental self-presentation on traditional luxury consumers' behavioral intentions.	Scientific Article	Science Direct	2023	☒	☒	☐
Managing the Challenge of Luxury Democratization: A Multicountry Analysis	Scientific Article	Sage Journals	2022	☒	☒	☒
An Exploratory Study: The Fast Fashion Paradox	Academic article	Google Scholar	2020	☒	☒	☐

Chapter 3. Full texts final selection				Document Included (Typology)	Book Chapters, Scientific & Academic articles, Surveys, Journal reports		
Time Horizon				1994 - 2024			
Keywords				Sustainability, Consumers, Greenwashing,			
Title	Type	Source	Year	Sustainability	Consumers	Greenwashing	
Design, Environment and Social Quality: From "Existenzminimum" to "Quality Maximum"	Academic Article	Google Scholar	1994	☒	☒	☐	
Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox	Book Chapters	Politecnico di Milano	2008	☒	☒	☒	
Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future	Official Document	UN Website	1987	☒	☐	☐	
Sustainability and Sustainable Development	Academic Article	Google Scholar	2013	☒	☒	☐	
Slow Fashion: An Invitation for systems to change	Journal Article	Google Scholar	2010	☒	☒	☒	
H&M Annual Report	Report	Official Website	2017	☒	☒	☐	
Sustainability as megatrend	Journal Article	Google Scholar	2014	☒	☒	☐	
The Luxury Trends Of 2018: Green Is The New Black, And More	Journal article	Forbes	2018	☒	☒	☐	

Title	Type	Source	Year	Sustainability	Consumers	Greenwashing	
A Triple-Trickle Theory for Sustainable Fashion Adoption: The Rise of a Luxury Trend	Journal article	Google Scholar	2021	☒	☒	☒	
Consumer sentiment on sustainability in fashion	Survey	McKinsey	2020	☒	☒	☐	
The Sum Of Small Things: A Theory of The Aspirational Class	Book Chapters	Princeton University Press	2017	☒	☒	☐	
Luxury Fashion Going Quiet as Minimalist, Logoless Style Stages a Comeback	Journal Article	Tex Fash		☐	☒	☐	
Zegna Group Reports €65M Profit Amid ‘Quiet Luxury’ Boom	Journal Article	Business of Fashion	2022	☒	☒	☒	
How Brands Are Selling Quiet Luxury to the Masses	Journal Article	Business of Fashion	2023	☒	☒	☒	
Bangladesh Factory Collapse Toll Passes 1,000	Journal Article	BBC Website		☒	☒	☒	
Overselling Sustainability Reporting	Journal Article	Harvard Business Review	2021	☒	☒	☒	
The Great Green Washing Machine Part 1: Back to the Roots of Sustainability	Report	Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights	2021	☒	☐	☒	
Capital: A Critique of Political Economy	Book Chapter	Google Scholar	1867	☐	☒	☐	

Chapter 4.
Full texts final selection

				Document Included (Typology)	Academic Articles, Book Chapters, Journal articles		
				Time Horizon	1979 - 2020		
				Keywords	Deconstruction Fashion, Sustainability, Philosophy		
Title	Type	Source	Year	Fashion	Sustainability	Philosophy	
Re-thinking the Place of Semiotics in Fashion Studies	Academic Article	Google Scholar	2016	☒	☐	☐	
Fashion and Philosophical Deconstruction	Book Chapter	Academia	2011	☒	☐	☒	
Deconstruction in Fashion as a Path Toward New Beauty Standards: The Maison Margiela Case	Academic Article	Google Scholar	2020	☒	☒	☐	
Deconstruction Fashion: The Making of Unfinished, Decomposing and Re-assembled Clothes	Book Chapter	Academia	1998	☒	☐	☒	
Deconstruction Fashion: Carnival and the Grotesque	Book Chapter	Google Scholar	2013	☒	☐	☒	
Time, Cruelty and Destruction in Deconstructivist Fashion: Kawakubo, Margiela and Vetements	Academic article	Google Scholar	2020	☒	☒	☐	
The Great Fashion Designers	Book Chapter	Google Books	2009	☒	☐	☐	

Title	Type	Source	Year	Fashion	Sustainability	Philosophy
Critical Fashion Practice: From Westwood to Van Beirendonck	Book Chapter	Google Books	2017	☒	☐	☒
Subcultures: The Meaning of Style	Book Chapter	Google Books	1979	☒	☐	☐
Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader	Book Chapter	Google Books	1992	☒	☐	☒
The Japanese revolution in Paris fashion	Book Chapter	Politecnico Library	2004	☒	☐	☒
Japanese Fashion Designers: The Work and Influence of Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and Rei Kawakubo	Book Chapter	Google Books	2018	☒	☐	☒
Characteristics of A-POC in Issey Miyake Collection	Academic Article	Google Scholar	2017	☒	☒	☐
The Golden Dustman: A critical evaluation of the work of Martin Margiela and a review of Martin Margiela: Exhibition (9/4/1615)	Journal Article	Google Scholar	1998	☒	☒	☒
Breaking the Idea of Clothes: Rei Kawakubo's Fashion Manifesto	Academic Article	Academia	2019	☒	☐	☒

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